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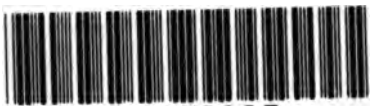
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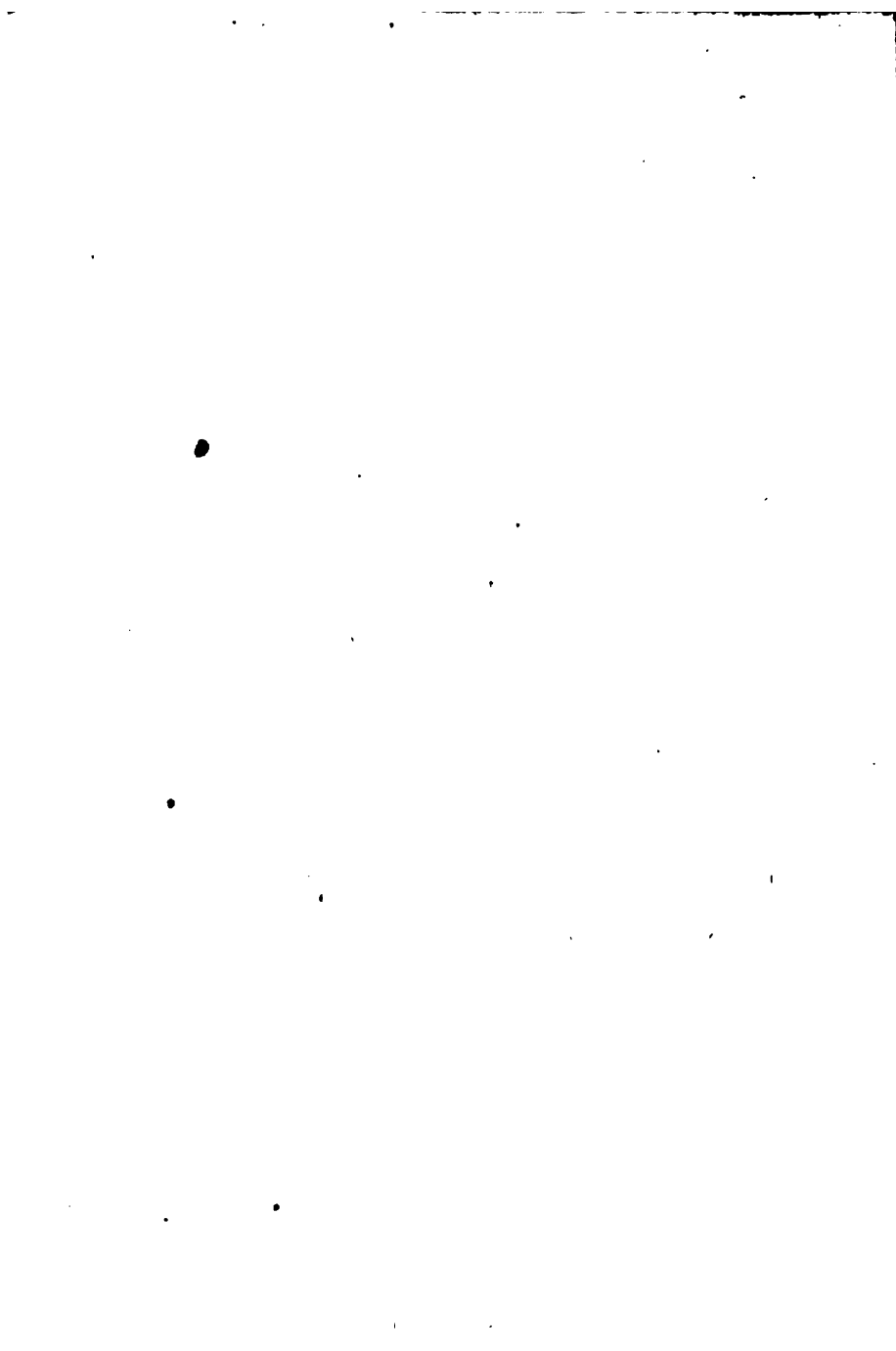


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S T. O L A V E ' S .

VOL. III.



# ST. OLAVE'S.

"Live for to-day! to-morrow's light  
To-morrow's cares shall bring to sight,  
Go, sleep like closing flowers at night,  
And Heaven thy morn will bless."

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. III.

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# ST. OLAVE'S.

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## CHAPTER I.



HE Festival was over. The spring-tide of excitement rolled slowly back, only a bit of tangled drift here and there betokening how high it had risen. The morning after the triumphant performance of "Jael," a detachment of charwomen took possession of the Hall of Guild and restored it to pristine neatness. They swept away the withered bouquets with which the orchestra was strewed; they tore down the evergreen wreaths which decorated the gallery front—reserving a few leaves, perhaps, for the flavouring of custards—and swathed the statuary in white canvas shrouds until they looked like so many uncoffined corpses waiting for the rites of burial.

Any one going down the streets of St. Olave's a week after the last great day of the Festival, would not have suspected that anything remarkable had occurred in the place. Except the newly-painted houses—and even these were beginning to lose their freshness—nothing remained to tell the story of departed splendour. The bristling rainbow-tinted brocades, the flounced silks, the zephyry muslins, disappeared from the High Street shops, and their places were supplied by bales of huckaback towelling, or webs of linen, stout and strong for family use. Careful housekeepers put their best china away for a three years' nap, locked up the seldom-used linen which had been put into requisition for chance lodgers, and betook themselves to the reckoning of their profits.

The Westwood people, too, went back to the old track.

There is a supreme moment in every human life ; a grand crisis of suffering, which comes once and no more, a fateful conflict, in which the whole nerve and vigour of our being is put to the test, wherein, for awhile, we struggle madly, ineffectually; then, blinded, baffled, overwhelmed, lie down and say, " Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do ? "

After this there comes to us a new life. The open vision is granted, the scales fall from our eyes; hand in hand with God, accompanied by angels, guarded by the unseen presence of spiritual ministrants, the rest of the way is travelled.

To such a crisis as this, David Bruce had come, and the scar of it staid with him all through life. To him, though, came the rest; the open vision was given, and room made for him in the grand company of those who have become perfect through suffering. After that terrible night all went on quietly as ever at Westwood, none but Janet knowing the great struggle which had been over-past.

The relationship between David and Janet Bruce was a singular one. It showed how two human souls may dwell together in calm, quiet, unchanging friendliness, yet without the slightest interpenetration—always touching but never mingling. There is a chemistry of mind as well as of matter. Like rushes towards like in the world of spirit. Some minds may touch for years—for a lifetime—but parting at last each is as perfect and self-existent as the different coloured grains of sand that have been tossing together side by side for centuries on the ocean shore. Others, by some sort of heavenly

alchemy, blend at once and for ever. No time nor chance can sunder them, nor even death itself break, except for a little season, the eternal bond that girds them. David and Janet were, or, through the education of circumstances, had become, types of two natures, which, though they may blend in perfect tenderness and charity, can never interpenetrate each other.

But in this great sorrow that had come upon him, Janet clung to David Bruce with grave, sweet sisterliness; and though, after that bitter night in which one single lightning flash of emotion revealed the great deep that lay beneath, no word of sympathy was ever spoken between them, though over all the past there lay the veil of sacred, unbroken silence, still the thousand little tendernesses of home life were exchanged more reverently; and if they lacked communion of thought, the communion of kind deeds never failed. Little by little, when the first bewilderment of the blow had passed away, outward life for those two became again almost what it used to be—like one of those clear, deep, rock-girt mountain tarns, which sleep on dark and calm alike beneath July sunshine or the rack and storm of winter.

Janet thought her brother might forget. Fame, success, hard work, the new interests that added social position gathered round him—these she hoped would scatter away the ashes of the old love and leave the altar of his heart empty again, if not for new flames to kindle there, at least for the steady glow of home peace to burn on unquenched. So that, although for both of them the brightness of life had been dimmed, some of its quietness might still remain, and by-and-by more than a little of its peace.

But she misunderstood him. St. Olave's could be no home to David Bruce so long as Alice Grey was there. Whilst in his sorrow there was no sting of wounded pride, no bitterness of the chafed vanity over which little natures fret and worry, still it was hard to weary through day after day of a life, from which all the sunlight had died out; to toil through old accustomed duties that had no longer any spring or freshness in them; to remember only, where once he had hoped. And so when a week or two after the St. Olave's Festival, there came an invitation for him to go over and conduct his Oratorio at the approaching grand Musical Commemoration of Munich, he accepted

it. From Munich he determined to go to Berlin, Leipsic, Cologne, and then to Italy and Switzerland, not returning to England until autumn, when St. Olave's would be Alice Grey's home no longer. He thought, if his present success continued, of leaving Westwood entirely and going back to Scotland. He knew, though Janet never said so, her heart was with the heather and the blue-bell still. A few months' hard work at his profession would enable him to reclaim the Court House from the stranger hands into which it had fallen. Then he might give back to his sister their old home with all its memories and belongings; and whilst he devoted himself more completely than ever to his life work, that solitary year at St. Olave's, with its brilliant lights and blasting shadows, might be quietly laid away.

Not forgotten. God forbid that any true man should ever forget, or wish to forget, the love which, though it has left him nothing but sorrow, was once sent by God to bind its golden tendrils round his soul and lift him nearer heaven.

Alice could never be forgotten. Lost, parted from him by a gulf wider far than death, still her name could never die out from his heart, nor be

in it other than a thought of purity and tenderness.

So David Bruce's coronation-day passed away, giving him, besides the laurel wreath of glory, that other and sometimes nobler crown of thorns which is never wanting in the regalia of God's royal children. He wore it very calmly, and the world, looking only at the shining leaves above, never knew that it was there.

Many a one, with beating heart and kindling eye, sets off in life's bright morning time to climb the mountain-top of some lofty purpose or great hope, thinking from its height to gain vast outlooks of delight. But even whilst he climbs, the shadows of evening fall, and when at last he gains the summit, there lies all round and above him nothing but the darkness of night, through which one by one the holy stars come out and shine. Yet let him not turn back in utter hopelessness. Better far that he should wait patiently for the sun that shall rise ere long. For the morning comes to us all, even as the night does.



## CHAPTER II.



DAVID BRUCE could not put the German Ocean between him and the old life so speedily as he wished. A few days after the Festival, he resigned his post as organist of St. Olave's, greatly to the concern of the Dean and Chapter, who were building much on the *éclat* their Cathedral services would win from the superintendence of so distinguished a musician. His engagement was binding, however, for a year, and there wanted several weeks yet to the expiration of this term of agreement. So morning after morning, while the choir was thronged with strangers who came from all parts to hear his wonderful music, Mr. Bruce still took

his accustomed place in the little oaken carved organ-pew which Alice's presence had consecrated evermore. And as he turned over the musty old manuscripts and brown worm-eaten folios of chants, there came before him her sweet girl face with its upward look of reverence and wonder; just as he remembered it months and months ago in the sunshine of that early July morning.

But they never met. He looked seldom, and only by chance, into Mistress Amiel Grey's curtained pew, and took care never to quit his place until the last lingering listener had left the choir. Often after service was over he would pace the long echoing galleries for hours together, gathering up thoughts for new music, or reading over page after page of old cathedral anthems whose grand harmonies were to him what books are to the learned. And so he tried to lull for a little while the memories that would not sleep.

At home he was tender and kind as ever. No one in that little household was chilled by any shadow which had come over his sunshine. None found his words less friendly, or missed in his presence the charm of the old strong protecting faithfulness. Only weak natures are marred and

maimed by sorrow. Disappointment is to a noble soul what cold water is to burning metal; it strengthens, tempers, intensifies, but never destroys. He was still the home-stay, the true-hearted brother, the gentle master, the trusty friend. And day by day the home at Westwood, utterly shorn as it was of happiness or joy, became more and more sheltered by deepening peace, the balm which sinless sorrow always leaves. Janet had won that peace long ago; over David's heart it was rising too; and even Mrs. Edenall, out of sorrow not sinless but conquered, now seemed to be slowly passing into rest.

David Bruce would scarcely have left his sister but for the great change that had come over Mrs. Edenall. She wearied them no longer by her restless, excited ways. The mainspring of passion seemed to have run itself down at last, and the emotional part of her nature lay still. She was quiet, docile as a child. Silent as ever though, and speaking no word of the great deep past, with all its possible grief and guilt; but it was only the silence of penitence now, not of pride. One could scarcely have known her for the same, but that, at rare intervals, there flashed forth from

her eyes a gleam of the old wild light, showing that far away down, the volcanic intensity of her nature was still smouldering, and might once more break forth again.

Janet offered no opposition to her brother's departure. Her meek patient face just grew a shade paler when he told her, a few days after the Festival, what he had determined to do.

"I shall be sair vexed to lose you, brother Davie," she said, in their old tender-hearted country speech, to which even yet Mrs. Edenall always listened with a sort of reverent sadness, "but I'll no keep ye back;" and then with one close hand-clasp she stole away from him, to bear her sorrow as best she might, alone.

Janet was very self-forgetting. Sacrifice had long ago become, not the accident but the rule of her life. All that she had to give was given to this brother of hers, and all of pain that the giving compelled, was borne in silence. Weary as any future without him must be, she was glad, and even thankful, for a change which might sever the present from the past, and set him in the midst of a new life, unblemished by the haunting remembrances that could never be quite blotted

out from Westwood. And so, when the crush and excitement of the Festival had passed away, instead of settling down to the years of unbroken home peace to which she had once looked, she bravely gathered together her brother's belongings, and prepared for a parting that might last through both their lives.

Alice waited day by day, wondering that Mr. Bruce never came to the Old Lodge. Perhaps six months ago her impatience might have overstepped the limits of St. Olave's etiquette, and setting its maxims at defiance she might have gone to Westwood on her own account. But under the able tuition of Mrs. Archdeacon Scrymgeour, Alice had taken on a little of the Close family tone. There was gathering round her a slight crust of hauteur, the commencement of that social petrification, which any one living long enough beneath the dropping-well of St. Olave's conventions, could not fail to experience.

The Archdeacon's widow saw this, and rejoiced in it. It was, to her, the earnest of that serene self-possession and full rounded dignity which would sit so well on the future Bishop's lady. And as little by little she noted how the young figure

drew itself up with more queenly grace, and the girlish head learned to wear its coronet of brown curls with more of womanly pride, she congratulated herself on the rare penetration Cuthbert had evinced by selecting a partner in whom beauty, breeding, birth and fortune were so admirably united.

And so the time wore on. Shortly after his return from Brighton, Mr. Scrymgeour was presented to the living of Grassthorpe, a little village about five miles from St. Olave's, and for the last month Mrs. Scrymgeour had been flitting backwards and forwards from Chapter Court to her nephew's Rectory, superintending workmen, purchasing furniture, unpacking plate, linen, and china, and initiating Cuthbert into the art of independent housekeeping.

She was very anxious now to expedite his marriage. True, the income of the Rectory was only two hundred, rather a small share for a gentleman to contribute whose bride was to bring him a dowry of fifty thousand at the least. But Cuthbert was not proud, at least he had not that pride which keeps a man from living on his wife's money, and enjoying it too. He would give her

position, and she would supply the means of sustaining that position; a very fair exchange, as Mrs. Scrymgeour decided, and we hope no one will question the perfect justice of the decision.

Besides, she had other reasons for pushing on the match. Alice was growing very charming. Her unformed nursery ways once worn off by contact with society, she had ripened into an elegant and fascinating woman, the object of much admiration—sometimes more than admiration. A swarm of butterfly cavaliers hovered about her wherever she went, some attracted by her beauty, some by her graceful manners, all by her wealth; and the sooner Cuthbert caged his pet-bird the better. Alice was only young, not very stable, quite open to the delicate compliments of men who knew how to offer them as elegantly as Mr. Scrymgeour himself. Mrs. Scrymgeour had discrimination enough to see that Alice's love for Cuthbert was not of that quiet, deep, overmastering sort which scorns rivalry, and holds faithful even to the death. She was very fond of him, and just lived on his caresses, and so long as no one pleased her fancy better, she would cling to him; but would it be safer to have the thing settled?—very much safer.

The only obstruction was Mistress Amiel Grey, and Miss Luckie had learned to adapt herself so skillfully to the old lady's needs, that there was no longer any pressing necessity for Alice to sacrifice her prospects to home duties. Aunt Amiel still lived on in that unconscious soul slumber which had come over her five months ago. No gleam of returning intelligence had ever broken through it. Dr. Greenwood told them she might live for years and years before the great and final change came, or it might overtake her at any moment. At all events, there was not the remotest possibility of her ever recovering so far as to perceive any alteration that might be made in the arrangements of the household, or to suffer from the absence of her niece.

Alice's loving care had removed all traces of sickness from the cheerful little room where Aunt Amiel passed the chief part of her time. She would not even have any change made in the dress or appearance of her aunt that might suggest ill-health. Mrs. Grey still wore the loose robe of soft, glossy, black satin, and kerchief of clear starched muslin, which used to be her costume when she was able to move about. Morning by morning,



Alice used to smooth down the silvery hair under the old-fashioned widow's cap, and adjust the cambric ruffles over the white hands that clasped each other so patiently. One might have thought, to see Aunt Amiel reclining in her large crimson-cushioned couch chair, that she had but fallen into some pleasant reverie—that by-and-by the hands would drop from their peaceful clasp, and the eyes lose that dim vacant look, and the set, never changing smile fade back again into an ordinary work-a-day expression.

And, indeed, the waking was near, much nearer than any of them thought.

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## CHAPTER III.



THE time was towards the end of April. There had been sunshine for several days, and the lilac buds in the Lodge garden, eager to escape from their long wintry prison, had burst forth into a flush of dainty green. But the Close elm trees, sturdy old veterans who knew by experience how surely April sunshine is followed by April frost, still kept their leafy treasures under watch and ward, only putting out here and there a tiny little bud, which contrasted brightly enough with their gnarled and rugged black trunks.

Alice sat by the oriel window alone, for Miss Luckie had got a week's reprieve from household

duties to visit some friends at a distance. But the young girl's thoughts were far enough away from the garden or its greenery. Her head was bent down over a piece of work she held in her hand, and smiles came and went like gleams of sunshine upon her face. The work told its own story. It was a pair of clergyman's bands, of the finest silkiest cambric. Cuthbert Scrymgeour was to wear them when he preached his first sermon at Grassthorpe on the next Sunday. He had promised to come over very early in the morning, and drive Alice and Mrs. Scrymgeour out to the rectory for the day.

It was Alice's first visit to her future home, and many were the wondering thoughts that thronged over her as she pictured what it would be like. But no thought of the duties that belonged to her life, no prayer for strength to do them, mingled with the gushing smile that as she worked grew deeper on her face. She neared the portals of coming womanhood as most young women do, thinking only of the flowers which hang upon its threshold, never of the beaten track, very unflowery often, that stretches out beyond. She had a dim, misty sort of notion about clothing clubs and

flannel petticoats, as in some way connected with the more prominent responsibilities of the female pastorate; and behind these loomed others quite as misty, touching the preparation of jelly and broth. These had been suggested to her by a little manual, very excellent in its way, entitled, "Hints to the Wives of Clergymen," which Mrs. Scrymgeour had given to her with a great deal of sound and judicious advice soon after her engagement to Cuthbert. Alice blushed down to her finger ends when the book was presented, and as soon as she had the chance, darted away to her own room to dip into its contents.

One chapter treated of sick visitation and the making of jelly. Alice's education in both these branches had been considerably neglected, and feeling that she was quite incompetent to undertake the duties of a pastor's wife until she could make tempting dishes for ill people, she determined to set to work at once. She put her curls behind her ears, tied a coquettish little pink apron over her silk dress, and went to consult with Simmons, who generously placed the still-room and its contents at her disposal. The result was, that after slopping away nearly half a bottle of sherry and using up a

whole packet of the best isinglass, the bewitching young amateur was fain to retire from the contest; the pink apron found its way, in a somewhat advanced stage of stickiness, to the wash-tub, and the jelly was consigned to a receptacle for miscellaneous odds and ends. So ended Alice's curriculum in the culinary department; but she consoled herself by a vague idea that when matrimonial duties did come to her share, a capacity for their fulfilment would somehow be vouchsafed.

She was still sitting there at the oriel window—not working though, for her hands were crossed upon her lap and her eyelids bent down until their long lashes just skimmed her rosy cheeks—when the door opened and Mrs. Cromarty came in.

“Miss Alice.”

But that waking dream was too pleasant for words so low spoken as Mrs. Cromarty's to disturb it. She came slowly across the long room and laid her hand on Alice's shoulder.

“Miss Alice, I think you'll need to come with me. There's a change upon the mistress.”

There was no tremor in the voice, its tones were very calm and low. Alice started, but not with

fear. Unconsciously holding the work in her fingers, and with that pleasant smile still lingering on her lips, she followed Mrs. Cromarty up the wide oaken staircase to Mrs. Grey's room.

Aunt Amiel's face was deadly pale ; the hands, so long motionless, twitched nervously at the crimson wrap which was thrown round her ; her eyes had lost their placid, vacant gaze, and wandered restlessly round. Alice dropped her work and sprang across the room to her aunt's side.

"Oh, Aunt Amiel, what is it? Do you want anything ; can I help you?"

No answer, but only that searching bewildered gaze. By-and-by the features became fearfully distorted, and the whole frame quivered as if convulsed. Alice could not bear the sight, and crouching on the floor, hid her face in the folds of Aunt Amiel's dress. Poor child, she knew little as yet of suffering or death.

"It was that warned me first," said Mrs. Cromarty, who stood by the couch, supporting her mistress with one arm, whilst the other was held round the half-fainting girl. "I've sent for Dr. Greenwood, Miss Alice ; he'll soon be here, and

then, please God, he'll be able to do something to ease her."

He came, but was powerless to help them in that time of need. He prescribed a few simple alleviations, and then—very gently, for he feared alarming Alice—told them that the end had come, that a few hours more or less was all of life that remained to Mistress Amiel Grey. Alice, stunned and bewildered, scarcely seemed to hear his words, certainly she did not heed them. As Dr. Greenwood was leaving the room he beckoned to Mrs. Cromarty to follow him.

"You have been in Mrs. Grey's service some time, and know more of her affairs perhaps than Miss Alice. Has she any friends who are empowered to act as guardians to her niece—relatives, you understand?"

"I can't say, Sir, for certain. Mistress was always shy of speaking about Miss Alice, but I've heard her say as much as that she meant to leave her the property; and indeed you know, Sir, there's none nearer kin to her than Miss Alice."

"That is what I wished to know. Frequently in cases of this kind the faculties revive for a short

time before death, and it is important that in case Mrs. Grey should be able to converse intelligibly, her friends may be at hand to receive any instructions respecting her niece."

Mrs. Cromarty thought awhile.

"The Mistress has overlived most of her people, Sir, and I never heard her speak of no kith or kin, let alone a cousin who serves with the army in foreign parts. He's a captain, Sir, I don't recollect his name, but now that you mention it I do remember her saying afore she was took with the stroke, that he would be back again soon."

"Miss Grey has no brothers, I suppose, no parents who can act for her."

"Not as I know on. She came here a baby a bit after I engaged housekeeper to the Mistress, and I never heard no word of nobody belonging to her that I can tell of. Mistress Grey was shy, very, about her relations, but I take it she's a orphan!"

"Most likely. Of course Mrs. Grey's affairs will be properly settled; she was always a woman of method and prudence. The Scrymgeours should be informed of this attack."

"I've sent to 'em, Sir."



"Then all has been done that can be done. I will come again in an hour."

Mrs. Cromarty came back. She threw a light silk handkerchief over Mrs. Grey's face, that when Alice looked again she might not be startled by the fearful contortions which from time to time passed over it.

"What does Mr. Greenwood say, Mrs. Cromarty?"

"The end's nigh at hand, darling. It's the Master's will, and we can't go agen it. Let us ask Him to send her a peaceful rest, for it's hard struggling with her now."

Mrs. Cromarty knelt and prayed. Many a time her prayers had companied departing souls to heaven's gate and fallen like a benediction on the lonely watchers who were left behind. But the dying one heard them not now. The last death struggle had seized her. She sprang forward with a convulsive start, and the handkerchief fell from her face, revealing its features cramped and contorted as if in violent agony. Then the spasm passed away, and she fell back again upon the couch, breathing heavily and at long intervals.

Alice still knelt by her. It was pitiable to see her helpless sorrow. For one moment, in that death throe, she caught a glimpse of her aunt's face. Its memory staid with her to her dying day. Then amidst the tumult and distraction of her thoughts, came the remembrance of him whose name, though it might be forgotten in time of joy, rose always as a presence of comfort in time of need, and she sobbed out :—

“Send for Mr. Bruce.”

So they sent for him. Cuthbert Scrymgeour was no favourite of Mrs. Cromarty's. With the clairvoyance of a purely simple and religious nature, she pierced through the outer wrappings of elegance and refinement to the deep of selfishness which lay beneath. She was glad for him not to be there, glad that in this deep sorrow Alice's thoughts should turn to David Bruce for rest and solace.

Lettice was despatched to the Cathedral to meet him, as he came out from afternoon service. She took her place by the little door which led to the organ stair, and then remembering that he often staid behind and played after the choristers had dispersed, she went up into his pew. He

was just accompanying the versicles that follow the Creed. He did not notice her; amateur musicians used often to come into the organ pew whilst the service was going on, and then steal quietly out again, without speaking to him. When the last response was finished, she went up to him. He was standing to make some alteration in the organ stops, and did not see her until she was close upon him.

"Please sir, Mistress Amiel Grey is dying, and Miss Alice has sent for you."

David Bruce staggered, as if a sudden blow had come upon him; the place seemed to reel round and round, and he clutched nervously at the low projecting bosses of the oaken work to keep himself from falling. Ah! people may talk of forgetting, but for some men memory never dies. Lettice's words showed him how slight as yet was the little film of quiet which had gathered over his life. He could answer not a word.

"Yes, sir," said Lettice, seeing the look of pain upon his face, "she was took for death about half-an-hour ago, and seems to suffer awful. Poor Miss Alice is dreadful scared, she's

never been used to see illness, and she's got no one to look to but you, for Miss Luckie is away, and the folks from Chapter Court is all out at Grassthorpe."

That name gave David strength to speak.

"Tell Miss Grey I will come; and stay, Lettice, perhaps you had better go on to Westwood; my sister might be of use."

That was all he said, and it was spoken in a short, quick, abrupt way, with the harsh, rasping tone of one who speaks in great suffering. Not a word of sympathy or sorrow, not even a single question.

"Laws what a quiet man!" said Lettice to herself, as she threaded her way down the narrow stair." I never seed such a quiet man in all my life. He don't look to have got no feelings in him at all. He ain't half so sweet as the gentleman young missis is going to get."

When she had gone, David pressed his hands tightly over his face for a moment or two. Then he locked the organ, and leaving the choristers to perform the remainder of the Amens on their own responsibility, he stole away down the silent nave, darkening now in the April twilight,

and across the Close to the secluded garden of the Old Lodge. He had never entered it since that evening nine months ago, when he stood beneath the window listening to Alice Grey, as she played the solo music of "Jael." But there was no time to think of that now. Mrs. Cromarty met him at the door. There were tears glistening in her dark deep eyes, and womanly tenderness, the tenderness which can both sustain and sympathize, softened the lines of her rugged face.

"I'm glad you're come, sir. She's wearied sadly for you. I don't mean Mistress Amiel Grey, but poor Miss Alice. She's just done nothing but moan, when will Mr. Bruce come? since I sent Lettice. Him as ought to comfort her is away, but if he was here, I don't think he'd be much hand. It's only them as has met sorrow theirselves, sir, as can teach others to bear it. This way, please."

She left him in the doorway of the room where Mistress Amiel Grey lay. Alice was kneeling by her aunt's side, her head resting wearily on the cushions, her whole figure sunk into the abandonment of hopelessness.

At the sight of her, pale and suffering, a rush

of tenderness almost overpowered David Bruce. His first impulse was to spring forward and take her to her own place, his faithful, unchanging heart. And well would it have been for Alice could he have done so. But before the impulse had time to shape itself into action, his eye fell upon her piece of work, the cambric bands which she had dropped on the carpet. They spoke of all that lay between him and Alice Grey. He was himself again, calm, quiet, self-possessed. But he could not be cold. Alice had done him no wrong, even though she had shadowed all his life. There can be no bitterness in a true and noble heart. He went up to her and took in his own the hand that hung down so listlessly.

"Alice, you sent for me. I have come."

She turned and nestled her cold white cheek to his shoulder as he stooped over her; there was rest in his presence. She kept his hand held fast in hers, as though the very touch brought comfort, and for long they stood together, keeping silent watch over the dying.

"Alice?"

The young girl started, and bent eagerly forward. It was the voice, the kind, well-remem-

bered voice, hushed so long. The angel of death had come, but, ere he bid the soul away, he suffered it to look once more through the window of its earthly tenement.

"Alice, my little Alice; my little child that came to me so long ago."

The suffering had all passed away. Aunt Amiel's face was still, quite still, and an answering glance of affection, deep, yearning, unchanging affection, repaid Alice's fond kiss.

Just then the Cathedral bells began to ring. It was Wednesday, the practising evening. Very harshly their clangour smote upon the stillness and peace of that room. As she caught the sound of them, Aunt Amiel looked perplexed, then pained; then, as if taking up the train of thought which had been upon her mind ere it fell into that long slumber, she said, quite clearly and distinctly—

"Those are the bells of Brandon Church. They must not ring, it was not a legal marriage. Douglas Ramsay knew it was not a proper marriage, he deceived her; poor Marian."

David set his lips together, and a mingled look of anger and sorrow came into his face, but he said nothing. Mrs. Grey paused, then began again—

"My poor child, why did they send her away? Tell the bells to stop ringing. Is that Mr Ramsay? Will he take care of her? The bells, the bells, stop ringing——"

She leaned back as if quite exhausted.

"What is she saying, Alice?" asked David Bruce.

"I believe she is wandering. Just before the stroke came she was saying something about bells ringing, it must be the same thought working in her mind now."

David went out to speak to Mrs. Cromarty, who was in the next room, and presently the bells ceased. One of the ringers remained behind though. There was no need for merry peals that night, but a dirge would be wanted ere long, and he stayed to toll it.

A messenger had been despatched to Grass-thorpe, but ere he arrived, that other messenger, who loiters never on any errand of his, reached the Old Lodge. Aunt Amiel died very calmly. She spoke no more after those few wandering sentences. By-and-by a look of strange, startled awe passed over her face; she opened her eyes, bright as with glory shining down upon them, then



there were a few shortening breaths, and all was over.

"Aunt Amiel! oh, Aunt Amiel!" sobbed Alice, but there was neither voice nor answer, only the steadfast calm of death sealing the pale features.

She tried to lift herself up, and then fell weeping into David Bruce's arms. He held her there quietly for awhile, then half led, half carried her to the oriel room, and laid her upon the sofa. There he would have left her, but she clung to him.

"Stay, Mr. Bruce, do stay. I have no one but you, don't leave me," and she clasped his hands tightly in hers.

It was a sad thing to do, but he stayed.

Sitting down by her, he soothed her with good words, kind words, tender, brotherly words, that had never come near the fire at his heart. Listening to them, Alice grew still. She drooped her head upon his arm, and, presently, spent with excitement and grief, fell into a troubled sleep, her hand still clinging to his.

They were together thus, when his sister came into the room. Janet started, she had not thought to find them so, but one look at the stern, almost

awful fixedness of David Bruce's face, told her the truth. No content was there, but only the calm of desperate endurance. He called her; his voice sounded so strange.

"Janet, come here."

She came.

"Take my place, sister, it is no place for me. Stay with her, she is very lonely. They—the people from Grassthorpe have not come."

He drew his hand from Alice's clasp, and Janet placed hers there. Just then the tramp of horses' feet was heard upon the gravel sweep of the Close, and soon Cuthbert Scrymgeour's rich musical tones rang through the hall. With one long, wistful, yearning look at Alice, which Janet, bending over her, did not notice, David Bruce left the Old Lodge, never to enter it any more.

Three days later he was on his way to Munich.

## CHAPTER IV.



ISTRESS Amiel Grey was buried with great state and solemnity. The Archdeacon's widow, who charged herself with the ordering of the proceedings, determined that everything should comport with the high position of the deceased. The great Cathedral bell tolled at intervals throughout the day, the blinds of the grey, grim-looking old houses were drawn as the procession wound slowly through the Close, and by order of the Dean a special funeral service was performed at the Cathedral. The cortége, though made as imposing as possible, was of necessity small. Mrs. Grey had outlived nearly all her own family, and for the

last few years, since Alice grew up into girlhood, she had kept herself in such strict seclusion that most of her friends had lost sight of her.

Cuthbert Scrymgeour acted as chief mourner, thus confirming the report which had been afloat for some time concerning his engagement to Alice. After this, it was understood as a matter of course, and commented upon accordingly.

Mistress Amiel Grey had left no will, at least none could be found. Shortly before her seizure she sent for the solicitor who usually transacted her business, but he was from home at the time, and when he returned she was unable to attend to the disposition of her affairs. Neither was anyone appointed to act in behalf of Alice until she came of age.

Mrs. Grey's only surviving relative was an elderly gentleman of high position, who had been for the last twenty years serving with his regiment in India. The families had never held any intercourse with each other, and it was by the merest accident that Miss Luckie, a few weeks before, had seen in the "*Times*" a notice of the embarkation of Captain Clay's regiment for England. It was to land in July. Until then, Mrs. Scrymgeour

decided that Alice should remain at the Old Lodge, under the guardianship of Miss Luckie. Immediately upon Captain Clay's return, pecuniary matters could be arranged, settlements made, trustees appointed, and then the long-wished for marriage solemnized with such splendour as was consistent with the circumstances. She had even determined in her own mind the arrangement of matters at the Old Lodge after the wedding; which servants were to be retained, which dismissed; what articles of furniture removed to Grassthorpe and what disposed of. She and Cuthbert had also agreed between themselves that the Old Lodge should be let for a few years, until he obtained minor Cathedral preferment, when it would make a convenient home for them previous to going into the Residence, which was at present the ante-penultimate stage of Mrs. Scrymgeour's ecclesiastical ambition.

Alice got over the shock of her aunt's death much better than anyone expected. Hers was one of those slender, fragile natures, which though they bend to every passing breeze of sorrow, soon regain their elasticity. As yet the real depths of her being had never been stirred; she had

neither enjoyed nor suffered with her whole soul. And indeed, when the first shock of Mrs. Grey's death was over, the change in the household was not very apparent. Miss Luckie continued her post of comptroller-general, Mrs. Cromarty remained as under-housekeeper, the whole establishment was kept up in the old style, not one of the servants being dismissed, or any new arrangements introduced.

As the warm weather drew on, Lettice and Colin were sent to Norlands to prepare the cottage for summer visits. Alice loved the country, and now that no one claimed her presence at the Old Lodge, she began to spend much of her time there. Occasionally too, her betrothed, with the Archdeacon's widow to play propriety, would drive over for the evening, or she beguiled Miss Bruce away from the quiet little Westwood home to ramble with her to the Norlands tower, and follow the windings of the ravine up to the Lynne waterfall, a couple of miles away. Here they would sit for hours together, talking—it was always Alice who began the conversation—about David Bruce. Sometimes Janet used to read her one of his letters, describing continental life and

manners, or she would bring some of the musical journals, and show Alice the notices of David Bruce the "distinguished Scottish composer" as he was called, and Alice listened with shy, wondering delight to his praise. But Janet passed over the pages where he spoke of dreariness and longing, of the memories which no change could lull, of the loneliness which all the world's praise could not break, but only strengthen.

Since that sorrowful night of Aunt Amiel's death, when Alice waking in the oriel room, met Miss Bruce's patient face bending over her, the two had been drawn closer together. Janet sometimes unconsciously shrunk from her friends in their prosperity, but if need of any kind overtook them, her heart unburdened all its wealth of tender loving-kindness. So as the year wore on, and spring evenings lengthened out, Alice came often to Westwood, not indeed bringing with her now, as once she did, the sunshine of unclouded gladness, yet somehow brightening that quiet household with a certain balmy cheerfulness which seemed to shrine her round wherever she went.

Mrs. Edenall scarcely ever joined in their con-

versations. Since the time of the Festival she had been gradually drooping. Her regal queenlike bearing was quite gone. When sometimes she slowly paced up and down the room, her tall figure bent and swayed like a reed. But she never complained. She would own to neither, ache nor pain. Dr. Greenwood was consulted. He said it was simply a depressed state of the nervous system, arising from excitement or over-anxiety, and recommended change of air.

Leamington was suggested: Madeira; the South of France; but Mrs. Edenall with a touch of her old iron-strong firmness refused to go away.

"If I must die," she said, "I will die here at St. Olave's. I will leave you if you wish it, but not the old city. And Janet, when I do die, let them bury me near the tower at Norlands, you once told me it was a churchyard. I could lie very quietly there."

So she staid with them, for Janet was not the one to let a stranger pass from her threshold to die.

Mrs. Edenall did not suffer much. It seemed as if God, having sent peace to the poor weary spirit, were very gently loosening it from a world



in which it had been so worn and tempest-tossed. Often Janet would gaze upon her face until its strange beauty almost melted her to tears. It had such a wan patient look now, strangely like that other face over which she had seen her brother bending on Mistress Amiel Grey's death night.

Ever since she heard of Mrs. Grey's death, Mrs. Edenall had been very tender towards Alice Grey. As she lay on the sofa during the long half-dark evenings of Spring, she used silently to take the young girl's hand in hers and hold it for hours together, sometimes caressing it as it lay like a snowflake on her black dress.

They were together there one evening in early May; Janet had left them for half-an-hour whilst she went to see a poor person in the neighbourhood. It was not a very brilliant conversational opportunity. Just a stray word or two now and again they spoke, and then in the long intervals of silence watched how the grey evening fell and the shadows of firelight grew stronger in the little room.

Alice had drawn a foot-stool close up to the sofa and was leaning her head upon Mrs. Edenall's breast. The child had such pretty caressing ways;

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people who rarely betrayed any outward show of tenderness, used unconsciously to fondle her. She was a pleasant contrast to those violently self-sustained young ladies whom you would as soon think of caressing as of putting your arms round the neck of a cast-iron pillar and giving it a loving kiss. She never seemed quite content unless she was nestling close up to some one, and finding a resting-place for her little fingers in some friendly clasp.

"Alice," said Mrs. Edenall, as she stroked the soft curls that lay upon her dress, "you have such pretty hair. I noticed it the first time I ever saw you."

"Yes," and a bright flush flitted over Alice's face.

"Cuth—people generally tell me it is very nice. Mr. Bruce said once that those little bits peeping out under your comb were just the same colour."

"Did he? Ah well, a long time ago I used to glory in my hair too. It was all like this," and Mrs. Edenall drew out one of the little golden brown tendrils which remained of her bygone treasures. Alice took hold of it and wound it over her fingers. As she did so, a strange shiver passed

over her. She dropped it and began to smooth down the grey bands that shaded Mrs. Edenall's forehead.

"Did you have a great trouble, Mrs. Edenall, to make your hair go like that?"

"Yes, my child,"—once or twice Mrs. Edenall had called Alice "my child." "I have had much trouble in my life, more I trust than ever you will have."

Their eyes met, with a wistful, searching, inter-communing gaze. Alice's, innocent and guileless, Mrs. Edenall's, heavy with long past memories, perhaps of sorrow, perhaps of sin. Alice was the first to break the after silence that fell between them.

"Miss Bruce told me once, that suffering was not so very bad if only we didn't do wrong too; and you know I think she has had a great deal of suffering."

Mrs. Edenall turned her head wearily away, and hid her face in the cushion to hide the tears which would force their way through the shut eyelids. Alice leaning upon her, felt a quiver run through the whole frame.

"Oh, Mrs. Edenall, are you ill?"

"No Alice, not ill, but my head aches very much."

"Give me your handkerchief and I will get you some Eau de Cologne. Janet has some that Mr. Bruce brought from London. I know it will do you good."

Without waiting for a reply, she took up the little embroidered handkerchief which lay on the sofa, and ran away upstairs; presently she returned, laying it cool and damp and fragrant on Mrs. Edenall's heated forehead. As she did so, she noticed the device in the corner. It was a shield, embroidered in satin stitch, with a motto, and beneath, the name, "Marian Brandon." Alice read it out loud.

"Marian Brandon. Was that your name, Mrs. Edenall, before you were married?"

Mrs. Edenall lifted her hand quickly as though to seize the handkerchief away, then dropped it again. It mattered little now. The end was very near; a few weeks more and her maiden name, with all the shame she had brought upon it, would be forgotten for ever.

"Yes, my name was Marian Brandon. It is a good name." And as she said the words, some-

thing like a flash of pride lighted up her pale face, but only for a moment.

"Brandon, Brandon," said Alice, "surely I have heard that name before. Ah! I remember, poor Aunt Amiel said something about Brandon church just before she died. But you know she was wandering, because directly after that she said something else about a little child, and some marriage that was not legal. Then her voice failed, and in a little while she died."

Alice paused for some time, trying to keep back the tears that came with the thought of that evening.

"Did you know my Aunt Amiel?" she said, by-and-by.

There was no answer. She asked the question again. But Mrs. Edenall had fainted.

## CHAPTER V.



LICE had as little notion of the management of fainting-fits as of the responsibilities of the female pastorate. But she did in her ignorance the best thing that could have been done. She ran out into the garden to seek Tibbie, leaving both parlour and hall doors wide open. The rush of cool air sweeping into the room revived Mrs. Edenall, and as Alice came back bringing Tibbie, she opened her eyes with a long, dreamy look of returning consciousness.

“It’s just a dwamm,” said Tibbie, pouring out a glass of cold water from the little ewer that stood on the window-seat. “Puir leddie, she’s

terrible frail the noo. Just sit by her and crack tull her a wee, Miss Alice, while the Mistress comes hame, and she'll no be lang."

Tibbie trotted back into the garden to finish weeding the lettuces. Mrs. Edenall did not seem inclined to talk any more; she just turned her face away, breathing heavily, as if in pain. In a few minutes Janet returned, and then Alice went home.

As soon as Mrs. Edenall was left alone, she took the handkerchief from her forehead and dropped it upon the fire. She watched it until every thread was consumed. The thick embroidery stitch in which the device was worked, withstood the flames longest, and for some seconds after the rest was crumbled to ash, the letters forming the name of Brandon smouldered upon the red embers. At last, letter by letter they shrivelled and fell into the flame, and then Mrs. Edenall stirred the fire together that no vestige of the ashes might remain.

The next morning Alice came again, partly to inquire after Mrs. Edenall, and partly to tell them of a pleasant plan which had formed itself in her kind little heart. She could scarcely wait to get

through the customary greetings before she began to tell them about it.

"Janet," she said, "I have been thinking how nice it would be if you and Mrs. Edenall would come and stop at Norlands for a month or two. Just now the country looks so pretty, and I am sure it would do Mrs. Edenall a world of good to get away from here. You know Westwood is low rather. Do come, will you?"

But Janet did not answer directly. A good many domestic contingencies had to be taken into consideration. Alice went on, pressing her suit more earnestly. That she was sincere, her bright smile and eager look told plainly enough.

"You were saying you remember, not very long ago, that Tibbie wanted to go into Scotland, but you could not spare her away. Now she can go whilst you come to Norlands, and Lettice shall come down here now and then to see that the house is all right. Now, you will come, I'm sure."

Janet smiled. She did not wonder how those frank, girlish ways, that bright look, those soft guileless tones had sunk far down into her brother's heart. Truly Alice Grey was made to be



loved, as flowers are made to bathe their fragrant cups in sunshine and dew.

"I would like fine to come to Norlands, Alice; it is a bonnie nook, and minds me of my own country. But I must not leave Mrs. Edenall, you know, and I am afraid she will be loth to move. I will go and ask her, though."

Mrs. Edenall came in. To Janet's surprise, she accepted the invitation at once. She even seemed eager to go, and the thought of it brought a faint tinge of colour to her sunken cheeks. How different from the cold, haughty indifference with which, little more than six months ago, she had dropped her last invitation to Norlands.

Alice was all animation and eagerness. She would not leave until the arrangements were completed, and that day week fixed as the time for their visit to begin. And if matters could not be settled for Tibbie to get away into Scotland so soon, she was to come to Norlands too, and shut up the Westwood house altogether.

Alice's frank kindness had done them much good. Something of cheerfulness and even of bright anticipation came over them both as they prepared to leave their quiet, sombre little cottage,

for the home in which such a hearty welcome waited them. Ah, had they known that Norlands held a grave for one of them, and that the living one should leave her all of earthly hope and longing there, how different it would have been !

Spring deepened into summer. There came evening skies of purple, and floods of yellow sunlight rolled over the wold hills, deepening as the day declined into crimson and grey. Janet and Mrs. Edenall had been at Norlands nearly six weeks. The wild hyacinths were blooming up in the orchard path when they went, the hedges were whitened over with snowflakes of scented hawthorn, and every passing breeze showered down upon the cottage garden a windfall of tiny little sycamore buds, or the feathery rose-tipped blossoms of the horse-chesnut. But now it was summer time, the weary, dusty summer, when flowers begin to look like gay ball dresses that have been over long worn, and thirsty leaves pant and flutter in the hot air.

As yet, no time was fixed for their departure. Janet often mentioned the subject, but Alice would never listen, and pressed them week after week to stay a little longer. The change was doing Mrs. Eden-

all much good. She scarcely seemed like the same woman who had come there so wan and worn and weary in the early spring time. Her step was firmer now, and with that had come back her erect queenly bearing. She could walk for hours together without failing; indeed sometimes she would spend the entire day in sauntering about the old tower and tracking out the different paths which led to it. Perhaps it might be that health would come back to her after all, and that the future might redeem the past, whatever that past had been. For with returning health there returned none of the old pride. The light that shone through her eyes was quiet, like lamps gleaming from cathedral windows while hymns are chanted within. It seemed as if the wild fierce flames of those long ago memories were burning themselves out at last, and a new life, pure and holy, rising from their ashes.

The bond between her and Janet Bruce was a strange one. Each knew that the other had known great sorrow, a sorrow whose scar could never be healed or forgotten; but what that sorrow was, when and how it had come, was as yet untold. All through their long intercourse the past had

been left untouched. They had never seen each other heart to heart. They were like two blind people walking the same road, holding each other's hands, listening to each other's voices, but never able to look into each other's eyes with that conscious communing glance wherein the whole soul reveals itself.

Alice often came to Norlands whilst they were there. She was very fond of bringing her bits of embroidery work, and making believe to be wonderfully industrious, as she sat by Janet's side in the little front room or on the rustic seat under the elm tree. For awhile she would stitch away diligently enough, but long before a single leaf or bud was finished, the work dropped from her fingers, she would lay her head down in Janet's lap and begin to murmur out her innocent day dreams of happiness, looking up now and then for an answering smile, which Janet gave kindly, though not without a certain bitter feeling at her heart for the absent brother whose life these dreams had crossed.

David Bruce wrote no word yet about coming home. He had conducted his Oratorio with great success at Munich, Leipsic, Berlin and Cologne.

His name stood side by side with those of the first musicians on the continent, and wealth seemed likely to follow in the wake of fame. He was in Italy now, visiting some of the great musical cities there. After spending some time in Rome and Venice, he intended to go to Switzerland and then return to Germany, where he would remain perhaps until far into the winter.

Alice's wedding was fixed to take place in August, as soon as possible after Captain Clay's return. Mrs. Archdeacon Scrymgeour had the entire management of it, and she found Alice a most docile bride-elect. On account of the short time which had elapsed since Aunt Amiel's death, the wedding could not be so magnificent as Mrs. Scrymgeour wished; still everything was to be in first-rate style, as befitted the nuptials of two distinguished members of the Close families.

Alice had fixed upon her wedding dress, white glacé with trimmings of tulle and green frosted leaves. The bridesmaids, six in number, were to be in white tarlatan with violet sprigs, and wreaths to match. The ceremony was to be performed in St. Olave's Chapel of Ease by the Dean, and the bride given away by Dr. Hewlett, the present

Canon-in-Residence. The young couple had not yet decided where to spend their honeymoon. Mrs. Scrymgeour leaned to Rome, as being *distingué* and suitable to ecclesiastical unions, but at that time of the year malaria stood in the way. Cuthbert would have enjoyed a spell of Paris pomp and gaiety, and Alice longed to spend the first bright days of her wedded life amidst the heathery mountains and ferny dells of Scotland.

"You know, Janet," she said, during one of these sunshiny summer afternoon talks, "I don't want gaiety or anything of that sort, but just to be quietly happy. And ever since you came here I have wanted to see those beautiful places you talk to me about. I should like to saunter over the Perth Inches and climb the hills of Kin-noul, and look for the shady lanes where the blue-bells grow, that you and Mr Bruce used to gather when you were children. Would not that be pleasanter now than Rome or Paris?"

Janet toyed mechanically with the curls that lay in her lap, and answered with half a sigh, half a smile. The smile was for Alice, the sigh for herself.

"And then, you know, we might go to the top

of one of those great purple mountains ; and I should ride on a little Shetland pony, and Cuthbert would hold the bridle, and we would have such pleasant talks. Oh, Janet, I hope we may go to Scotland ! ” And then the picture got too beautiful for words, and Alice finished it in a waking dream.

So the time wore on, until the middle of July. It was a sultry summer afternoon. The hay-makers ceased their work and rested under the spreading trees, or beneath the blackberry hedges that grew so thick all round the Norlands meadows. Alice was spending the day at Chapter Court, with Cuthbert, who had come over from Grassthorpe. Mrs. Edenall had gone to the Roman tower ; she often set off there quite early in the morning, taking books and work, and not returning until dusk. So Janet was left alone, with the exception of Lettice and Colin, who were having a cozy chat in the back yard.

There were only two sitting-rooms in Norlands Cottage. These both pointed to the west. One of them, which Mrs. Cromarty called the best parlour, was painted light blue, and hung with home-made curtains of fine netting, wrought

by Mistress Amiel Grey in her younger days. It was furnished in the quaint, old-fashioned style one sees in country houses; corner cupboards, full of china; bowls of rose and lavender leaves; marvellous specimens of fancy work, in the shape of Rebeccas, and Elijahs, and Hagars; porcelain shepherdesses on the chimney-piece, and little round tables covered with shells or curious pebbles. The other room, where Janet sat now, was wainscotted, and had been furnished within the last few years, very simply, but in a more modern style than the best parlour. There was a pure, fresh, wholesome, country feel about both the rooms, an atmosphere of goodness and quietness. One might fancy that the house had no memories of evil about it, that those old walls, could they speak, would tell only of quiet domestic happiness and home peace.

There had been a gentle rain in the night, which freshened the worn-out flowers, and the scent of lavender, clove pink, and honeysuckle came in now through the open window. For sound the far-off murmur of the little Luthen mingled with the flutter of leaves, or the solitary chirp of an idle sparrow answered the grave,



measured monotone that came from the rookery in the elm tree at the corner of the cottage.

For more than an hour Janet had been reading in that room ; then she began to knit, and, when she was tired of that too, she drew the white curtains over the lattice, and leaned back in her easy chair, thinking of the life that was and the life that might have been.

Who is it says that we all learn, sooner or later, to be thankful for our *might have beens* ? It may be so, it must be so, but not always in this life. Some vexing problems find their solution even here, and of a few bitter griefs we learn to say, in earthly speech, "It is well." But the great *might have beens* wear their robes of mystery all through life, and not until eternity clears away the clouds of time shall we learn to thank God for them.

Very rarely did Janet Bruce think of her "*might have beens*." It was her wisdom, as it is the wisdom of most people, to put them quietly away, waiting for clearer light to shine upon them. Only now and then, in the loneliness of unemployed leisure, their ghostly faces peered out from the past, and seemed to mock her as she looked

upon them. She was roused from one of these sad-coloured reveries by the distant tramp of footsteps on the narrow winding path that led up from the ravine. As she listened, the sound came nearer and nearer, and then she could hear several voices speaking in low, muffled tones.

She drew aside the window curtain to look into the garden. Four tall, strong, stalwart men, who seemed as if they might be haymakers, were just entering the little gate. They had made a sort of hammock of their fustian coats, and upon this they were carrying a man, who, from the care and tenderness with which they bore him, must have been very greatly injured.

Most women, sitting alone in their peaceful homes, would have trembled at such a sight, thinking surely that woe had chanced to some one near and dear to them. Janet, in her great loneliness, had none to tremble for. There was only one person in all the world whose death could pain her now, and David was far away. So she waited, with a face perhaps a little paler, but calm as ever.

Presently Lettice came tottering into the room, white and almost fainting.

"Oh! Miss Bruce," she said, "they've been and gone and brought a gentleman what's tumbled down the Norlands landslip and killed himself right out; leastways, he lies as if he was took for death, but the men says the breath's in him yet. Do tell them to take him on to St. Olave's, ma'am; I'm clean beat out with fright, I am, ma'am. I can't abear being nigh hand a dead body, and he'll be a corpse as sure as sure afore morning. Do let 'em take him back, ma'am." And Lettice, who was a good-hearted girl, in a general way, but helpless as a baby in any time of real need, threw her apron over her head and burst into a fit of nervous crying.

"Hush, Lettice," Janet said, as she made the trembling girl sit down on the sofa, "we must do what we can for him. Wait here until I call you," and she went out.

The four men were standing with their burden in the little square entry. He lay perfectly motionless. A white handkerchief which they had taken out of his pocket was thrown over the face. The foremost of the men, a sturdy, honest-looking fellow, acted as spokesman for the rest.

"Very sorry, ma'am, to trouble you, but we

thought he'd die straight out if we trailed him to St. Olave's i' the drouth an' sunshine, an' we knowed Mistress Amiel Grey, bless her, were allers willing to help them as needed it, so we made bold to bring him here, being nigh hand."

"You did quite right. I will do what I can for him. Has he met with an accident?"

"'Deed, ma'am, and he has, and an ugly one, too; this here's the way it happened, ma'am. Me an' these here," the man jerked an elbow towards his companions, "was leadin' hay i' the meadow just t' other side the river, and I were forkin' a load up to t' waggon, when we see'd a gentleman on horseback galloppin' as hard as he could go along the bridle road fra Norlands here. We called out to him to hold hard, for yon land-slip's a mighty awk'ard place for them as isn't used to it. But he didn't take no heed, and afore we could any on us get across to stop him, it were all done. T' poor beast just gived a sort o' lollop an' slithered right away down wi' t' gentleman a holdin' on to him."

"It were a awful sight, ma'am," continued the man; "but God Almighty knows we'd ha' saved him if we could. Bill an' me came across and

picked him up, and t'others fastened t' hoos up and comed after us, and we hugged him up the rocks best way we could."

"You had better bring him in here," said Janet, opening the door which led into the best parlour. "Stay, though, I will fetch something to put him upon."

Lettice was still sobbing hysterically into her apron, so Janet went up-stairs herself and dragged down one after the other a couple of mattresses, which she placed on the middle of the floor with some blankets upon them. Then she fetched a pillow, and the injured man was laid carefully down.

He lay quite still, as if dead, and gave not the slightest sign of suffering. From his dress he appeared to be a gentleman. His coat, a dark grey tweed, was of the stylish cut which fashionable men wear; his linen was beautifully fine, though torn and soiled by the briars over which he had fallen. His neck was bare, as if the scarf or tie had been dragged off. One hand was gloved, on the other was a splendid seal ring of white stone. He was tall, and broad, and finely proportioned.

"I ax yer pardon, ma'am," said one of the men, as Janet stooped to lift the handkerchief from the face, and he looked down upon her slight figure with a pitying sort of tenderness, "I'm feared he ain't much of a sight for ye to look at. He were mighty grewsome when we picked him up, and his face sort o' clicked and drewed itself. It won't do ye no good, ma'am, to look at him, and we just covered him wi' this, 'cause we were feared if anybody caught sight on him they'd get a sort of turn. He was a awful weight to haul up. Bill an' me was almost beat out afore we'd got him half-way. I thought Bill would ha' gone into a swoond."

"The doctor must be sent for first thing," said Janet. "Come into the kitchen and rest, and the boy shall go down to St. Olave's for him."

The men followed her out into the clean, old-fashioned kitchen, whilst Miss Bruce directed Lettice, whose wits were slowly coming back again, to get some refreshment ready. Then she hunted up Colin, and told him to saddle Benjie and set off at once to St. Olave's to fetch Dr. Greenwood, or the nearest doctor that could be got. The four men were soon back again to

their work. One of them kindly offered to stay with Miss Bruce until the doctor came.

"*She* don't seem to be no good nohow," he said, pointing towards the kitchen; "and ye're nobbut small yourself, ma'am, and it's sort o' fearsome like being nigh hand a man as may turn a corpus any moment. I ain't afeared o' accidents, ma'am, 'cause I've see'd a sight of 'em i' my time, and I'll sit by him an' welcome if ye like."

"You are very kind," Janet said, quietly, "but I am not afraid." So the men left.

Janet went back again for awhile to her old seat by the window, from which, half an hour ago, she had seen the sufferer brought in. But it seemed kinder, even though it could do him no good, to keep watch beside the stranger who had been so unexpectedly thrown upon her for help and protection. He was lying quite still, evidently insensible or dead. Not a movement stirred the white coverlid which she had spread over him; not a breath, that she could perceive, heaved the broad chest; his hands—the ungloved one very white and smooth—hung listlessly down, not clenched or drawn as if in pain. Perhaps, even now, it might be only a body—nothing

but a body — over which she was keeping watch.

She knelt down by him. Lettice was moving about the room, picking up some stalks of meadow grass which the men had trodden in with them from time to time stealing terrified glances at the figure stretched prostrate on the floor.

After a few moments, Janet stooped down and slowly lifted the handkerchief from the pale face. There was a long pause.

“Lettice you can go away.”

And awed by something in the tone of her mistress's voice, Lettice crept noiselessly out of the room.

So Janet Bruce and the man whose faithlessness had blighted all her life, met again.



## CHAPTER VI.



F that lonely watching time Janet never spoke to any one. It was lived between God and her own soul. But when it was over there was a strange light upon her face, as if from some angel presence which had but just departed.

The doctor came. Not Dr. Greenwood, but a stranger, a sharp dapper man, with a fussy address, a head that seemed to be somehow loose on his neck, and was always jerking about on invisible springs, twinkling little brown green eyes, and a voice that made its exit through his nose instead of travelling by the orthodox highway for the transmission of that organ.

Janet went into the entry to meet him. "Miss Bruce, I presume, ma'am," said he, with a wave of the hand and a succession of spasmodic bows, "sister of the eminent composer of that name, formerly organist of the Cathedral; servant, ma'am, with the greatest of satisfaction. Do not recognize me perhaps, my name is Piflet; Marmaduke Piflet, medical practitioner, number Twenty-one, Little Back Priory Street, St. Olave's. I have come to undertake the management of a case which has taken place in your neighbourhood. Serious case, ma'am?—fit—accident—stroke? please introduce me to the patient, ma'am."

Janet took him into the room where the injured man was lying, and related as briefly as she could the particulars of the accident as they were given to her by the labourer.

"Awkward spot that Norlands landslip, very awkward spot; ought to have been walled up by the Corporation years ago; shall write a letter about it to the *St. 'Olave's Chronicle'* this week myself. Culpable neglect of the public safety, very culpable neglect. And now, ma'am, with your permission we will consider what means

can be put in requisition for the treatment of the case."

"Humph," continued the little man as he knelt on the mattress, and carefully scanned the patient's face, already settling into a ghastlier hue. "Not got to the terminus yet, but seems to be travelling that way by express train. Case of concussion of the brain, not apparently attended with severe external injuries, except this," and Mr. Piflet pushed back the hair, revealing a wound on the temples from which the blood welled slowly out drop by drop.

"Don't recognize the face, ma'am; lived in and about St. Olave's all my life and never saw it before to my personal recollection. Haven't thought, perhaps, of examining the dress to see if anything will clear up his identity?"

Janet replied that she had not.

"Of course, ma'am, wouldn't like to disturb him. But you needn't have been afraid; he's got no more feeling about him than a dead sheep."

Mr. Piflet thrust his hand into one of the pockets of the coat; it contained nothing but a cigar case and the fellow glove to that which the injured man wore. Next he felt in the waistcoat

pocket and brought out two or three cards which he scanned eagerly through his blue spectacles.

"New name this—Ramsay, Douglas Ramsay. Don't know any such person in this locality ;—stranger most likely, ma'am ; tourist, I should say, coming down perhaps from the moors up above Norlands."

Mr. Piflet waited for an answer. Janet replied with a slight falter in her voice, that such was very likely to be the case.

"Turning faint, ma'am, I perceive, said Mr. Piflet, looking up into Miss Bruce's pale face. "It's an unpleasant occurrence, and I'm sorry there didn't happen to be a public-house in the neighbourhood, or anything of that sort to take him to. But he won't trouble you long, ma'am, he won't trouble you long." And then Mr. Piflet proceeded to examine his patient.

"You will find me in the room opposite if anything should be wanted," said Janet, as she went out.

"All right, ma'am. And if you'll allow me to recommend you a little stimulant, just a thimble full of brandy to exhilarate the nervous system. Some

ladies object to the use of alcoholic beverages, ma'am," and there was a sly twinkle in the doctor's eye which contradicted his words, "but I assure you in the present emergency a very slight quantity, for instance——"

Janet did not wait to hear the exact dose prescribed. Her strength was failing and she hurried away that she might be alone. She went into the sunshiny little room on the other side the entry. All remained as she had left it an hour ago, except that the flickering shadows of the elm tree leaves had shifted from the blind, and a tame raven that belonged to the cottage had hopped in through the open window, and was balancing himself on the arm of the chair which she had occupied. As she stood upon the threshold now, the bird did not stir from his place, but only glowered solemnly at her out of his dim unblinking eyes.

She sat down, covering her face with her hands, and tried to think. Scarce half an hour had passed when Mr. Piflet's little quick rap was heard at the door.

"Sorry to interrupt you, ma'am, but I don't see anyone else about. Some scraps of linen if you please, rather worn will be all the better, and a few strips, stout and strong, for bandages."

Janet fetched them. In about a quarter of an hour he came back again.

"A basin of water, ma'am, and a sponge, and one or two towels. And if you think your nervous system equal to such a strain upon it, I should be able to complete my operations more expeditiously with a little of your assistance."

Without a single word, Janet brought the water, and quietly took her place with Mr. Pifet beside the mattress. He was just beginning to bind up the wound in the temples.

"Perhaps you will be kind enough to cut me off a few strips of linen first, ma'am, about this width," and the doctor made a notch with his penknife; "Yes, that is quite correct; and now I'll trouble you to support his head. Look, so, just raise it a little with your right arm; there, I see you are perfectly equal to everything I require."

Janet put back with a steady hand the heavy locks of curling yellow hair, the hair she was once so proud of. It was clotted and dabbled with blood now, and in some places whole locks were torn away as if they had been caught by out-reaching brambles or fragments of rock, in that terrible fall.

"Is he very much injured?" she said, calmly pressing the sponge upon the wound, whilst Mr. Piflet prepared some lint.

"Pretty tolerable, ma'am, pretty tolerable," and Mr. Piflet ran over his list of casualties, as if it had been an inventory of goods at an auction sale.

"Two or three ribs broken, ankle dislocated with flesh rent, shoulder put out, severe internal injuries, and a few bruises and contusions; no exterior wound except this in the head."

"But he does not appear to suffer much."

"Bless you no, ma'am, no more consciousness of pain, as I said before, than a dead sheep. And its a great mercy too. Why, if he had the use of his faculties, he'd be shrieking out like mad, such a hash as he's made himself. Just a little higher, ma'am, if you please, your arm is giving way; but perhaps you find his head too heavy. We might get a couple of books, I think that would hold it up."

"No, I will hold it myself. I am not tired," and Janet drew the poor dying head closer to her bosom, the resting place she once hoped it would have all through life. But she betrayed no sign of feeling.

Mr. Piffet finished binding up the wound, then gave his hands a vigorous shake and rubbed them briskly together. Then he scanned Janet keenly through his blue spectacles.

"I must do you the credit, ma'am, of saying that you've the most astonishing nerve for a lady that I ever met with. Dear me, half the women in England would have fainted fifty times over before they'd got through what you've done this afternoon. You're a credit to your sex, ma'am, you're a credit to your sex. But then you see, ma'am," and the little man waved his hands, "circumstances alter cases. Now, if the unfortunate individual had been a relative, for instance, a husband, or some one you felt very personal to, no doubt your fortitude would have failed, and you would have succumbed to the ordinary weakness of your sex. But you see strangers make a more limited demand upon one's sympathies. I would thank you to hold that head quite firmly for a moment or two longer, until the bandages have had time to settle, and then we will lay it on the pillow. I don't see that you need be troubled with it any more."

Janet was glad that the doctor had talk enough



for them both. He did not wait for any reply, but went on in a brisk nasal twang,—

“Strangers, ma’am, do not excite our sensibilities to a painful extent, and we are generally able to discharge the duties which devolve upon us in relation to them with fortitude. I must confess, however, Miss Bruce, that your conduct on the present emergency is beyond praise, altogether beyond praise.”

Mr. Piflet emphasized this eulogistic little essay by sundry vigorous flourishes of the sponge which he held in his hand.

“And now,” continued he, gathering together the bits of hair which he had cut off, “I don’t see any good in prolonging my attendance at present, especially as I have one or two other urgent cases that are demanding my professional services. I will leave the patient under your charge, Miss Bruce, he cannot be in better keeping; and in the course of an hour or so I will look in again.”

“And if he should revive?” said Janet.

“Oh, bless you, ma’am, but he won’t revive, nothing of the sort. He’ll die in the course of the evening as sure as I’m a medical practitioner.


My only wonder is that the breath has kept in him so long. I assure you, my dear madam, I shouldn't have thought it worth while to attend to him at all, so far as his own personal advantage is concerned, but you see there will of course be a lengthened account of the accident in the *St. 'Olave's Chronicle*, and it's more creditable to the medical man who is called in if the case is done up just a little for appearance sake. If you don't mind having the trouble you can give him a spoonful of brandy now and then; it won't make any difference one way or another, and you'll feel as if you were doing something."

"You can let his head go now, it will do just as well on the pillow as in your hands," continued Mr. Piflet, drawing on his gloves and freshening himself up in a general way previous to his departure. "It's just possible that consciousness may return, and in that case you must watch him, for fear he should get restless and unloose the bandages. If that wound begins to bleed again, he'll be a dead man in no time. Good afternoon, Miss Bruce, good afternoon. I'll look in again before long," and with a second succession of little bows, Mr. Piflet bustled away to look after his horse.

Douglas Ramsay lay quite still. His eyelids were half open, and through the thick golden lashes his blue eyes gleamed with a cold, glassy stare. But there was no sign of pain yet upon the face, that was growing paler and paler, nor the faintest motion to tell whether life was waxing or waning in that prostrate form which had once been Janet's pride and joy.

And sitting down she watched him there.

## CHAPTER VII.

URELY there is nothing on this earth more Godlike in its forgiveness than love. Nothing so slow to resent, so ready to forgive, the blackest ill ; so full of that divine spirit, which thinketh no evil, and endureth all things. Keeping her lonely watch by the side of this uneonscious, dying man, Janet Bruce forgave him all the wrong he had done. Memory overpassed years of separation and faithlessness, to rest on the old long ago time, when those eyes, so dim and vacant now, had bent over hers with the glorious look of tender, and, as she hoped, undying love ; and that arm, so heavy and nerveless, held her in its strong, protecting clasp.

In his prosperity he had forgotten her, but

dying, God had brought him back to her again, that his head might find its last resting-place on her breast, and his farewell breath spend itself upon her faithful lips. She had but one wish now, that ere he died they might once more look into each other's eyes with the long, loving look of perfect trust, a look wherein all the past might be forgiven. This granted, she could go through the rest of life that remained to her peacefully and even with a glad, quiet thankfulness. It was not much to ask. That heart is surely humble enough which prays for nothing on this side of eternity, but the memory of gladness—only its memory. Praying for this, Janet grew calm, and there came into her face a happy look that had not rested there for years.

The day wore on. First the flickering shadows of the vine and ivy leaves died off from the lattice window; the sunshine crept up and up until at last it just crested with a golden rim the topmost twigs of the great elm tree. Then the sun dipped down beneath the Norlands hills, leaving upon everything the quiet, pleasant even tint of early summer twilight. Just the sort of gloaming that Janet fancied her future might be.

At the prospect of having a death in the house, Lettice had begged so piteously to be allowed to go back to the Old Lodge, that Miss Bruce had not the heart to refuse ; and when Colin went for the doctor, she sent a message by him to Miss Luckie, asking that one of the older servants might be allowed to come to Norlands, in her place.

Early in the afternoon Mrs. Cromarty came. None so trusty as she was in time of sorrow or sickness. As soon as she crossed the threshold, her very presence seemed a stay in the house. There was a certain steady, rock-like firmness about her, to which, in their time of need, weaker natures unconsciously clung, and never found it fail.

Lettice was not a model of neatness at the best of times, and, in the bustle of her hurried flight, had left everything in mid-day disorder. Mrs. Cromarty laid away her bonnet and shawl and began to set things to rights, as soon as she got into the kitchen. Whilst doing so, she came upon the locks of hair, some of them clotted with blood, which Mr. Piflet had brought out of the room after dressing Douglas Ramsay's wound. They were lying together in a little heap on a table in

the corner of the room. Mrs. Cromarty took up one of them and began to smooth it over her finger. By-and-by an expression, not of womanly pity or tenderness, but of sternness, almost of wrath, came into her dark face.

"Surely I know that yellow hair again," she said to herself in an undertone. "Isn't it the devil's own colour that shone so bright on the false head of him as lured my young mistress away from kith and kin, and cast her out to perish?"

She dropped the hair. It fell amongst the rest, coiling and uncoiling like a living thing. She watched it for a long time, her countenance darkening with bitter memories.

"I wouldn't say for certain it's him, though. Maybe it belongs to some poor bruised creature as has the golden hair without the grewsome heart; and the woman he loves may be waiting for him now, and wondering why he stays so long. God bless 'em, and have mercy on 'em both. It's a weary world, it is, and them's well done to that leaves it afore the sorrow comes."

Mrs. Cromarty did not invent any excuse for going into the room where the dying man lay. She knew that Janet was there, and there was a

sort of native refinement about her that prevented her from intruding unasked into the presence of others. When she had done all that could be done in the way of making the house look comfortable, she took out the little Testament which she always carried in her pocket, and sitting down in the open doorway, began to read. Presently Miss Bruce tapped on the wall; there were no bells in the cottage at Norlands.

Mrs. Cromarty laid her book down and obeyed the summons. Janet was bending over Douglas Ramsay, so that his face was hidden. Only those heavy masses of golden hair seemed to make a sunshine in the room.

"Mrs. Cromarty, I would thank you to bring me fresh water and a sponge, in case these bandages should give way."

Mrs. Cromarty fetched them.

"And can I watch him, ma'am, while you rest? You're looking weary, and it's sort o' lonesome tending strange folk. It's none like sitting by one's own kin."

Janet looked wistfully at the poor helpless form lying before her. Ah! if he had only given her the right, years and years ago, to take the place



she held by him now ! But God had given it to her at last, and none should keep her from it.

"You are very good, Mrs. Cromarty, but I will stay with him. It is not wearisome to me. You see he does not suffer much ; he lies quite still. And Janet moved slightly to one side, so as to let the pale face be seen.

Mrs. Cromarty looked steadfastly upon it, but spoke no word, and then left the room, closing the door quietly after her.

"It's him," she whispered, as she went back into the kitchen. "I could have told that face among a thousand. And so his proud deeds have come back upon him. Verily the Lord plentifully rewardeth the evil doer !"

By-and-by Mrs. Edenall came in, and without staying to speak to any one, went upstairs into her own room. Janet pondered how best to tell her of the startling change which had come over that peaceful little household since she left it. Mrs. Edenall was easily unnerved. Even to listen to any story of suffering made her shiver and turn pale ; and since her health failed, she

had been more susceptible to any sudden shock. This room, too, where Douglas Ramsay lay, was the one where she generally passed her time in an evening. It was farther away from household sounds than the other, and had a pleasanter outlook into the garden. She must be told at once; there was no time to lose.

Janet listened to Mrs. Edenall's footstep on the stairs, and then came out, taking care to shut the door after her.

"No, we will not pass our time there to-night," she said, as Mrs. Edenall laid her hand upon the latch, to go in as usual; "come and let us sit in the other parlour."

Mrs. Edenall followed her, and they sat down side by side in the old-fashioned window-seat, looking out into the garden. The flowers were all closed up now, and not a sound was to be heard but the far away babble of the Luthen on the rocks below. Janet shivered as she heard it.

"You are cold," said Mrs. Edenall, "and the night air blows sharp; let us have a fire lighted in the blue room, and finish our evening there."

"No, I am not cold, indeed I am not cold; it was only the chill from this open window. Have you had a pleasant day?"

"Pleasant, yes, it has been pleasant," and there came up a sunshiny smile over Mrs. Edenall's face; "and what do you think, Janet, I do believe I went to sleep for nearly all the afternoon, sitting on one of those stone coffins. I had taken 'Joan of Arc' with me, and was reading that beautiful farewell to her native valleys—you remember it, don't you? I once heard you say you had read it."

And Mrs. Edenall began to repeat in her low, rich voice, those tender, passionate, yearning verses :—

"Lebwohl ihr Berge, ihr geliebten Triften,  
Ihr traulich stillen Thaler, lebet wohl!  
Johanna wird nun nicht mehr auf euch wandeln,  
Johanna sagt euch ewig Lebwohl."

"I read them over many times, and then I must have fallen asleep, for I had the dearest, peacefullest dream."

Surely it had been a dear dream, if only the memory of it brought that smile to Mrs. Edenall's face.

"It was about a friend, a very dear friend, whom I lost many years ago, nearly twenty years ago. I thought we were together again, and all the dreary time between was forgotten; all the pain and weariness. It was a very beautiful dream. I think of it now as we do of perfect music. I think some one came past and woke me, for when I opened my eyes the grass was trampled down just before me, and some of the wild flowers were broken."

Then they were silent for awhile, Janet trying to think of some words in which to tell her of that other thing, which seemed scarce more than a dream in its strange suddenness.

"Miss Bruce," said Mrs. Edenall, by-and-by, "I think you must have been having a nap this afternoon."

"No, indeed," said Janet, wearily; but why?"

"Well if you had, I should say that while you slept the enemy came and—not exactly sowed tares, but tore down those beautiful sweet peas which climb over the garden gate; not the large gate, you know, but the little wooden stile which leads down to the ravine path. The blossoms were scattered far into the garden when I

came in, as if some one had got his feet entangled in them and dragged them along. Alice Grey will be so grieved, for those flowers were quite her pets."

Janet remembered that was the gate at which the men who carried Douglas Ramsay came in.

"Some people have been here this afternoon, Mrs. Edenall; you will have to hear it, and I may as well tell you now; something fearful has happened since you went away this morning."

"Indeed, it cannot be very dreadful, for you look so calm. Have some thieves been about?"

"No. You remember the Norlands landslip."

"The landslip. Ah, I cannot forget that."

"A gentleman was riding past there this afternoon, and his horse took fright, and both were thrown down together."

"Oh! how shocking. And did the men bring him through the garden, then, on their way to St. Olave's?"

"No, they have left him here. He is lying in the room opposite, now."

"Oh! Janet, and you have been alone all day with no one to help you. How cruel. Has any one been sent for?"

"Yes. Colin went for the nearest doctor, and a person from Little Priory Street came; a Mr. Piflet. He did what he could for him, and promised to come again soon."

"And the poor fellow will have to stay here until he recovers so far as to be able to be removed."

"He will never recover. Mr. Piflet says he will in all probability die before morning. I am very sorry for you," added Janet, seeing that Mrs. Edenall trembled and could scarcely keep her seat. "I was afraid it would be a great shock to you. If only the house at Westwood had been ready for you to go there. But you could not do that, it has been shut up so long."

"I don't want to go anywhere, Janet. I will stay with you. I am not so frightened as you think. Where is he? let me try if I can help him; is he very much hurt?"

"Internally, very much, but there is no wound that you can perceive except on the temples, and Mr. Piflet has bound it up. He has never spoken at all since they brought him in, and I don't think he suffers."

"And have none of his friends come? Is there no one who cares anything about him?"

For the first time Janet's voice faltered. She said very faintly—

"He has no friends that we know of. He appears to be a stranger."

"And can you not ascertain his name?"

Janet could not trust herself to speak those two words which had once held for her such a world of happiness. She murmured out something about a card with a strange name upon it, not known in St. Olave's.

"But I must go back to him," she said, "I have been a long time away now. Mr. Piflet said he might revive a little just at the last; we must not leave him alone."

She left the room, but turned faint and was obliged to go into the garden for a moment. The cool night air revived her, and then she went back to the room where Douglas Ramsay lay. As she passed the little sitting-room she noticed that it was empty, and the door of the other parlour, that she had closed carefully after her, was standing wide open. The sight which met her as she stood upon its threshold first startled, and then as

all its meaning slowly dawned, benumbed her into a cold, dull stupor of grief and horror.

Mrs. Edenall had thrown herself upon the mattress beside the dying man. His unconsciousness seemed to have passed away; he moved now and then as if in pain; the linen which bound his wounds had given way, and blood was slowly oozing out again upon the pillow. Mrs. Edenall's head was on his breast, her arms clasped round his neck. She was weeping passionately, and as from time to time she raised her face to kiss the cold whitening lips, she murmured through her tears—

“Douglas, Douglas! speak to me, speak to me once more before you die! Oh! Douglas, my own, my only one!”

Janet understood it all; dimly at first, and then with cruel, vivid, intense pain. This was the woman for whose love her own had been cast away. This Mrs. Edenall, whom she had cherished as a sister, who had sat by her fireside and slept beneath the shadow of her roof, was the stranger whose fair face had beguiled him from his truth, and quenched out of her life all its hope and joy. Janet comprehended now the fitful restlessness,



the proud reserve which never spoke of the past, the long intervals of gloomy silence, or wild, impetuous excitement. For one moment all the pride and purity of her nature revolted from this guilty creature who lay prostrate before her ; this woman who was a sinner.

But only for a moment. It was no time for upbraiding. With one quick prayer for help, she pressed out of sight the bitterness of the past. Without a word of reproach or surprise she went quietly round to her own place by Douglas Ramsay's pillow, and began to replace the bandages which had fallen off. Her hands were very steady, her face gave no sign of the agony within. She washed away the blood which was trickling over his forehead, and smoothed back the heavy tangled hair. As she did so, he muttered very faintly—they were the first words he had spoken—

“ Soft and cool like Janet's hand—Poor Janet Bruce. I ought not——”

And then his voice died out in a fluttering gasp. Mrs. Edenall's face had been hidden on his breast all the while ; now she sprang to her feet like a wild creature. As with a lightning flash of intelligence, she, too, understood it all. Her whole

frame shook and trembled with excitement ; her face grew stormy in its fury. Drawing herself up to her full height, she glared fiercely down upon Janet.

Janet returned the glance with one, calm, pure, unblenching—one before which guilt might cower and soiled memory blush. But Mrs. Edenall did neither.

For a long time those two women stood looking into each other's faces, through the moments of a silence, broken only by the low breathing of the dying man, which was growing feebler and more fluttering at every gasp.

He muttered something, and moved restlessly.

Janet bent over him ; but Mrs. Edenall pushed her fiercely away.

"He is mine, only mine ; he is my husband. You never loved him as I did ; your northern blood is cold, cold. He deceived me and forsook me, but I love him still ; he belonged to no one but me. Douglas, speak to me, my darling, and tell me you are mine, only mine."

She pressed her face close to his, raining down upon it a flood of hot passionate tears. Then there was silence. By-and-by a faint light flickered

over the ashen countenance; a beam of intelligence broke feebly from the glazing half-open eyes, which had wandered to Mrs. Edenall's face. Janet's was turned away that she might not look upon its paleness.

"Marian."

"Douglas, you know me, you love me, you speak to me! Say it again, Douglas, my own, my own!"

"Marian! Marian!"

And so, with her warm lips brooding over his, and her great, deep, passionate eyes pouring out their flood of tenderness upon him, Douglas Ramsay died.

It was Janet's hand which closed his eyes and straightened those stalwart limbs for their death rest. Then she would have led Mrs. Edenall away, but Marian shook her off with a wild imperious gesture, and clung more closely to the corpse, covering with tears and caresses the wan face that could feel neither any more.

Very patiently Janet rose, and left the room. It was no place for her now, the unloved, the forsaken one. She might not even watch over the last sleep of him whom living she had loved so

well. She dragged her slow, weary steps into the little sitting-room, and crouched down on the window-seat, looking out into the greying twilight. Then she clasped her hands over her face, and tears, the bitterest Janet Bruce had ever shed, came slowly trickling through the thin fingers. All was so utterly dreary and hopeless. Nothing in the present of her life, nothing in the future, but only dim, patient endurance. God forgive her that, in the first bitterness of that sorrow, she prayed as a greater than she once did, "Oh, that I now might die!"

So often, groping through clouds and thick darkness, we stretch our feeble hands to heaven and cry for light; only one gleam to lighten the shadows of the road—only one ray to show where we may plant our feet without treading upon thorns. And then comes to us that solemn voice, sounding across the gulf of ages and centuries, clear as when first it stilled the Patriarch's questionings, "He giveth no account of any of His matters." Listening to this voice, we learn to wait patiently, until heaven shall bring the open vision.

Janet learned to wait, too. In that hour the

bitterness of death passed; the bitterness of life, too, which is sometimes keener than any death can give.

The room grew dark—so dark that she could not see the tall, drooping figure that came gliding towards her, until Mrs. Edenall knelt at her side. Her hands sought Janet's in the darkness, and held them tight. By-and-by there was a voice; It was low, humble as a little child's—

“Janet, forgive me, I loved him very much.”

And, because in the calm, majestic presence of death, all human wrongs fade away, Janet pressed her lips on the poor worn face, and the past was blotted out.

## CHAPTER VIII.



HEY had been sitting there for nearly an hour, when Mrs. Cromarty came up the long stone passage which led from the kitchen into the front of the house. Some white linen hung over her arm; in one hand she held a small oil-lamp, in the other a basin and towels. She paused as she passed the open parlour door, and, flashing the light of her lamp into the little room, she said, in a calm, deliberate voice—

“I am going to attend to the body, ma’am.”

“The body,” nothing but “the body.” Oh, the chill that steals into our hearts when any human form that we have caressed and fondled,

over which we have poured smiles of loving tenderness or tears of sympathy, comes to be spoken of as only "the body." Oh, the loneliness—far worse than death—which those must feel whose faith looks no farther than this—whose creed leaves nothing of departed friends but "the body!"

Janet shivered, but said nothing, and Mrs. Cromarty passed on.

By-and-by, Janet, utterly over-worn and weary, went away to her own room for such rest as sleep could give. Mrs. Edenall stayed behind. In the dark and stillness, she could hear distinctly the sounds that came from the other side of the passage; the splash of water, the muffle of the linen wrappings, the fall of something, now and then, as Mrs. Cromarty moved about the dead man.

She had been sitting there for a long time, when Mrs. Cromarty passed again and went into the kitchen. Mrs. Edenall fancied she heard her bolting the outer doors, and, thinking that all was quiet for the night, she stole noiselessly into the death-chamber.

Douglas Ramsay was still lying on the mattress in the middle of the floor, where the men had first laid him; but everything about him now was

pure snowy white. The large sheet which was thrown over him revealed the grand outline of his figure, unworn by sickness, and unmarred even by the fearful accident that had befallen him. The feeble glimmer of the lamp-light flickered upon the golden hair, which, like a glory, fell around his brow. There was just a gleam of glassy blue through the thick eyelashes, and the lips had stiffened into the still rigid lines that no more human passion could have leave to break. His hands—those great strong nervy hands which, last time she saw him, were thrust out in horror, as if to bid her away—clasped each other peacefully upon his breast, just as his mother might have placed them years and years ago, when he lay an innocent baby on her knee.

She threw herself down beside him once more, and laid her white cheek to his ; the lamp scarce showed which wore most of death's hue. Ah ! he had been very cruel and very wicked ; he had wronged and deceived her, but that was over now. All the old wild passionate love came surging back again to her heart.

“ Douglas ! Douglas Ramsay ! ” she moaned forth, clasping the poor dead head to her breast.



"I gave up all for the love of you ; speak to me once more, Douglas, my own, my only one !"  
And then she kissed his lips, his eyelids, the hands which lay folded in the icy stillness of death.

Mrs. Cromarty had been into the kitchen to fetch a fresh supply of oil for the lamp. She stood in the open doorway now. For awhile she paused, her eyes fixed on the two prostrate figures before her. She gazed intently from one to the other. The golden hair she knew but too well, not the grey tresses that were mingling with it. While she looked in wonderment and perplexity, Mrs. Edenall rose and knelt by the side of the mattress, her hands clasped upon the pillow where Douglas Ramsay's head lay.

"But," she said, at last, "he did love me. 'Mine was the last name he spoke—'Marian, Marian !' Oh ! if I could hear it once more, only once more !"

Mrs. Cromarty's swarthy face grew pale ; a look of infinite compassion, not unmingled with a certain stern indignation, came over it. She stepped a few paces forward, set down the little phial of oil she had brought with her, and laid a hand on Mrs. Edenall's shoulder.

"My lady, Miss Marian Brandon!"

The name silent now for nearly twenty years; the maiden name, buried with the innocence of maidenhood. Mrs. Edenall looked up. One quick glance of recognition passed between them; then she crouched at Mrs. Cromarty's feet and buried her face in her dress.

"Honor Grant! you have come back to call my sin to my remembrance. Do not despise me. I erred, but I have suffered very much."

"God forbid, Miss Marian!" and Mrs. Cromarty bent wistfully down over the worn features, pale and sharpened now, yet retaining still the faint impress of their girlish beauty. "Ye have enough to bear, and I'll no make the burden heavier. It's small call one poor human sinner has to despise another! The Lord knows I've prayed for ye night and day, that if ye were living, He would send peace to your poor heart; for ye did it ignorantly, I aye believed that. Come away, my lady, now. This is not the place for you."

Mrs. Cromarty raised her tenderly and carried her away to her own room—just as, more than thirty years ago, she had carried her, a fair-haired,

sleeping little girl, to the lace-curtained cot, in the stately manor of Brandon.

Next morning Alice Grey came. She had heard of the accident, not the death which followed so closely upon it. She only saw Miss Bruce, for Mrs. Edenall was too ill to leave her room.

Janet received her very calmly. To strangers, or even to such a friend as Alice Grey, the death-stroke which had come must be spoken of as "a sudden shock," "a very painful accident." Nothing more than this; no word of the hopes it had stricken down, or of the bitter waters into which forgiveness had cast the branch of healing.

"And for you to have had the trouble of it, oh, Miss Bruce, I was sorry!" said Alice, feeling as if her kindness in bringing Janet and Mrs. Edenall to Norlands had been somehow at fault. "If only more of the servants had been here, I should not have minded so much; but it was such a terrible thing for you to be left alone with him, except Mrs. Cromarty. I almost wonder you did not go away."

"That would not have been kind, Alice.

don't think you would have done so yourself. I was glad—I was very thankful to be able to watch over him."

"Ah! but you are so good; even strangers are sure to be cared for by you."

*Even strangers!* Janet clutched the white curtains in her hand as Alice said this. They were sitting in the broad, low window-seat of the little parlour, looking out into the garden, where a few withered sweet-pea blossoms, torn off by the men as they brought Douglas Ramsay through the gate, were still scattered about. *Even strangers!* She was very thankful that no one, not even Alice Grey, knew what Douglas had been to her.

"Does he suffer very much, Miss Bruce?" said Alice, toying carelessly with the ivy leaves that straggled in through the open window.

"Not now. He died last night."

Alice let the ivy branch drop from her hands and her face grew a shade paler. Death was more a real thing to her now than it had been six months ago. She was quiet for a little while, and then said with the slightest possible fall in her voice:—

"He would not be able to see any of his friends. I wonder if he had a wife, or—or anyone he loved very much. It is hard to die quite alone. Do you know if he was a stranger here?"

"I believe he was."

"And did he tell you anything about how the accident happened; was he able to speak before his death? Oh, Miss Bruce, I beg your pardon, I ought not to have talked so much about him," Alice said hurriedly, seeing Janet's utter pallor and the trembling that had seized her. "It was such a terrible thing, I am sure it must have shaken you very much. Don't tell me any more now, we will talk about something else."

Janet was glad of the release. She leaned back in her chair and closed her eyes. Yes, it was indeed painful to recal those last words of his, or speak them.

"You must not stay here," said Alice, as if anxious to change the subject. "Westwood is not ready for you to go to, but you can come to the Old Lodge. You know he was nothing to either of you, and you can do him no more good. Go back with me this morning. I told Miss Luckie I should bring you."

Much to her surprise, Janet declined.

"You are very kind, Alice, but for myself I would rather stay here until after he is buried. It will do me no harm."

"That is just like you, Miss Bruce. If you had loved him," a faint blush dyed Alice's cheek—"If you had loved him as much as I love Cuthbert, you could not have done more for him."

Janet almost felt the shadow of a smile come to her lips as Alice said this. Was that young girl's fancy, the plaything of a passing hour, fed on caresses and sweet words, to be placed side by side with the overmastering love, strong through disappointment and holy through suffering, which had bound her to Douglas Ramsay?

But she said nothing more about it, and quietly turned the conversation into a different direction until it was time for Alice to go away.

"If you won't come with me I suppose I must leave you. But Janet, you bear trouble so quietly. If it hadn't been for just that one little tremble in your voice, I should scarcely have known that anything was the matter. I wonder if it is the manner of your country to be so still and staid.

I'm sure if it is, Mr. Bruce was quite wrong when he said I had Scottish blood in my veins." And with that Alice left the room.

"Who said you had Scottish blood in your veins, darling?" said Mrs. Cromarty, who was coming out of the blue room and met Alice in the long stone passage.

"Only Mr. Bruce, nearly a year ago. I remember it very well," and there came a pleased, softened look over Alice's face, "I was copying out some music for him, and I happened to say the name of a place in Scotland which English people can never pronounce. And I did it so well he said I must belong to the country in some way. May I come through your kitchen, Mrs. Cromarty, I want to give a message to Colin before I go?"

"Yes, and welcome, Miss Alice; you'll leave a streak o' sunshine in it where you pass, and we want it sadly the day."

Alice followed her. As she passed through, she caught sight of the little table in the corner where the locks of Douglas Ramsay's hair were still lying. From a sort of superstitious feeling Mrs. Cromarty forbore to burn them and intended that

they should be buried in the coffin. Alice went up to the table.

"Is that some of his hair, Mrs. Cromarty, I mean does it belong to the person, the gentleman who was killed?"

"Deed and it does, Miss Alice. Yon's Douglas Ramsay's hair."

"Douglas Ramsay"—Alice mused a while. "Mrs. Cromarty, do you know if Dunnie is the pet name for Douglas in Scotland?"

"Maybe it is, honey. Scotch folk handles their christened names so queer, while ye never know what's what. They call Isabella, *Isy*, an' that beautiful name Margaret, as is fit for a born Queen in England, is never nought but *Maggie* when ye get t'other side o' t' Tweed."

"Because poor Aunt Amiel used to talk about a little boy called Dunnie, that she knew a long long time ago, before Uncle Grey died. And he had beautiful curling golden hair, that must have been just like this."

"Happen it might, Miss Alice. Scotch folk mostly has golden hair, I've heerd tell."

"Mr. Bruce hasn't, and I'm glad of it, for Mrs. Edenall says golden hair is false; she would



never trust golden hair, and you know Mr. Bruce is as true as the sun."

"He is, honey, that's the right word ye've said; Mr. Bruce is as true as the sun. It'll be good luck to her as he weds, for where he loves once he loves for ever. It 'ud be a better world nor it is if folks all did the same."

There was a long pause, during which Alice wound and unwound the yellow lock upon her finger, thinking the while of Cuthbert. She was quite sure he would be always true. At last she said,

"Mrs. Cromarty, may I go and see him, this gentleman who is dead? You know, since poor Aunt Amiel died I have not been afraid. I should like to look at him."

Mrs. Cromarty had something of the notion so common amongst poor people, that strangers pay a sort of respect to the dead by asking to see them. So she made no objection, but took the key out of her pocket and preceded Alice to the room where Douglas Ramsay lay. She waited, standing upon the threshold whilst Alice went in alone.

The young girl removed the linen sheet, and bending down her face, gazed earnestly upon his. No sleeping face need have been calmer. Alice

laid her hand upon his cheek, she wound her fingers in and out amongst his golden hair. At last—it was a strange thing for her to do—she stooped over him and without a shudder pressed her lips to his forehead, once, twice, and yet again.

Mrs. Cromarty stood at the door watching her. As she did so, she noted a faint resemblance between the two faces. There was the same broad, round, open brow, the same clearly pencilled eyebrow, and full drooping lid. When the sunlight fell on Alice's hair too, it was of the same tint as that which lay upon the death pillow. As Mrs. Cromarty watched the two, a vague thought crept into her mind, gradually shaping itself into clearness. Was it indeed so, that this young girl, this Alice, was no niece of Mistress Amiel Grey's, but the child, the base-born child of Marian Brandon ; and was she now bending over her father's corpse ? She looked keenly at Alice from beneath the shade of her dark overhanging brows. Alice glancing, up saw the look and its mute questioning.

“ You are thinking it is very strange that I should kiss him, but he looks so quiet, I

am not at all afraid. I have such a feeling as if I had seen that face before."

She replaced the linen cloth, and without another word they both left the room. Mrs. Cromarty locked the door. She never mentioned to anyone the suspicion which had crossed her mind. She possessed in an eminent degree, when needful, the rare gift of silence; but like Mary she kept this thing, and pondered it in her heart.

When Alice got out into the Norlands road, the sunlight flashed upon something entangled in the fringes of her parasol. It was a tress of that golden hair which had lain on the little table in the kitchen. Alice would not throw it away. She wove it, as she walked along, into a little knot, a true lover's knot like the one Cuthbert had given her in a locket, not long ago. So for the second time that day, love and death came together in her thoughts. Then she folded it up in a broad leaf that she gathered from a sycamore-tree by the road-side, and put it into her pocket-book. It was such beautiful hair.

## CHAPTER IX.



HEY buried Douglas Ramsay in the deserted churchyard of Upper Norlands, near by the Roman tower where the little coffin lay. The day after his death, Janet wrote to the housekeeper of Glen Ramsay, informing her of the accident. In the course of a few days the family solicitor came down from Perth. He had an interview with Miss Bruce and Mr. Piflet, visited the grave, and then returned into Scotland, carrying back with him the few valuables which were found on the body. The Glen Ramsay estate, which was entailed, passed to a distant member of the family.

No one attended the funeral officially, except Mr. Piflet and the undertaker. There was the usual string, however, of ragged little children, slatternly women, and idle out-of-work men who had strayed down from St. Olave's to see the sight. From the narrow parapet of Norlands tower, two sad-hearted women in mourning watched it all; and when the last lingering bystander had sauntered off, and the sexton shouldering his spade, was whistling homewards through the cornfields, they came down and stood for a long time side by side over the mound which was now the only memorial of him who had blasted both their lives.

The veil was rent from between them that once so thickly covered all the past. No need now to shrink from the mention of it, lest a chance word should betray its sins or sorrows. Nay more, each had now a right to know what that past had been. Janet only had to tell of trust dishonoured, of promises broken, of a life shattered by grief, in which no fault of hers had been. For Mrs. Edenall, the story was darker.

As they came home in the dreamy sunshine

of that July afternoon, she spoke of the old time, of her maiden home—she kept back its name though, and her own, too—of the first meeting with Douglas Ramsay, their wild, passionate love, his vows and promises, that midnight flight into Scotland, followed by the mock marriage.

“I did not know it was false then. He gave me this,” and she pointed to the ring which hung so loosely on her shrunk finger, “He gave me this, and I thought all was well. I had never been deceived before, Janet, I did not know what it meant,” and something like a flash of scorn lighted up those great grey eyes, melting down into yearning tenderness as she turned and saw the black mould of Douglas Ramsay’s grave darkening the greensward of Norlands churchyard. “I love him still, though,” she said quickly, as if even to remember his sin were a wrong, “I love him still. I never gave over loving him. I never take back what I give once.”

Then she told of those few brief stormy weeks of alternate love and jealousy at Bulach; his desertion, and her loneliness. After that, the

birth of her child, and the dreary journey back to the home she had disgraced.

"Oh," said Janet, "I did not know you were a mother," and she recalled Mrs. Edenall's face as she had once bent over that little coffin in the Norlands tower.

"I am not, now ; my child is dead, and I shall not dare to look upon its face in heaven. Janet, we can never forget our sins, neither in this world nor the next. The stain of them may pass away, but their memory, never."

"Tell me more," said Janet.

"I could not bear to look upon my child, its baby fingers burned me, its innocent eyes killed me ; I tried to destroy it, and they put me into an asylum. I suppose I was mad, but I don't know. I think I was there a long time, and when I came out they told me my child was gone, dead ; Janet, I was so glad. I could not endure to look upon her. I hope she will not know me in heaven. I laughed and said it was better so. They thought I was mad still ; but it was only because I loved her so much ! Can you understand that, Janet ? Think what it is for a mother to give a child a life that is worse than death, a life that can never be

anything else than a stain to her. Think if that girl, Alice, with her golden brown hair and her guileless face, wore a brand of shame that her mother had given her, that kept her back from love and home, and all that women care for—had she not better die?”

But Janet said nothing, and Mrs. Edenall went on—

“My father and mother died too. They had no child but me, and I broke their hearts—a pleasant memory, is it not? I could not stay in the house where I had been an innocent girl, so I wandered far off and lived where no one knew me, away amongst the Lakes. But visitors came there, and I was afraid; so my solicitors advertised for a quiet home for a lady—a *lady*, Janet—and you took me in.

“That is all. You see I have been a great sinner. Cast me from you if you choose; it is no more than other people have done.”

Janet looked at her. Her face was very wan, but a mocking light gleamed and glittered in her strange eyes, the light of flickering reason. Yes, the poor brain had been all too rudely shaken. That death in life which is worse than death itself,



was surely nearing ; it was even now upon her.

Suddenly she started forward with a fierce gesture, as though she would have sprung down the ravine.

" This is the place !" she cried.

It was, indeed. They went to Norlands by the fields, to avoid passing the landslip, but coming home again, Janet's thought were pre-occupied, and she had taken the turning which led to the ravine path. Just now the precipice gaped beneath them. All around, the earth was torn up by the tramp of horses' hoofs. Here and there branches were broken from the trees, and great clusters of bracken were rooted out and scattered along the rocks.

Just that one smothered shriek, such as Douglas Ramsay might have uttered when his horse took that fearful leap, and Mrs. Edenall was calm again.

" Don't go away," she said. This is the spot where he fell. Let us sit down and feel it all."

She sat down on the bank where they had all rested, the afternoon of the pic-nic, and leaned against the same tree which had kept her from death there. But neither of them spoke of that.

She smoothed the torn earth with her hands, from time to time loosening a pebble and watching it roll gently down the steep incline.

"You see it is not very terrible," she said, "they go down so quietly. Janet, I would like to be there too and slip gently away to that river and to death. If only the good God would let us die when dying is easier than living."

By-and-by she took a little book out of her pocket and laid it on the sloping edge of the ravine. It began to glide down, but more slowly than the stone had done, for now and then a fern spray stopped it, or a tuft of blue-bells tangled it amongst their slender stems. She leaned forwards, far forwards over the ravine to watch it down, so far that Janet feared some sudden fancy might win her to follow it. She held her dress tightly with both hands.

"Janet," Mrs. Edenall muttered in a hoarse voice.

"What is it?" said Miss Bruce.

"Look there," and she pointed to a ledge of rock some fifty feet below them.

A stunted ash tree, gnarled and knotted, grew out from a rift in the rock. It was leafless as

though blasted by some lightning flash. On one of its grey branches a curl of golden hair, *his* hair, gleamed in the sunshine ; and with every stray breeze that passed, a silken scarf of the Ramsay tartan fluttered to and fro.

The sight of them turned Janet faint. "Come away," she said, feebly. "This is no place for us."

But Mrs. Edenall looked steadily down.

"I must have them," she said, as the ashen pale lips drew farther and farther back from her clenched teeth. "I will have them," and she set her feet down to climb the sharp rocks that jutted out beneath.

Janet held her back by main force. Only to certain death could any, even the most surefooted, descend that gaping chasm. Mrs. Edenall struggled to get free, but she was very weak now ; Janet soothed her by promising that they should come again some time ; and then keeping fast hold of her arm, they set off towards the cottage.

Mrs. Edenall spoke no more after that. Unresistingly enough she suffered Janet to lead her homewards. But as she paused again and again, and turned towards the spot where that tress of

golden hair shimmered in the sunshine, there was a set, determinate look in her face which thrilled Miss Bruce with a new and nameless fear. Janet resolved as soon as they got back to Norlands to send for Dr. Greenwood, and see if something could not be done to remove those dismal death trophies, not alone for the sickening horror which they had struck into her own heart, but because she knew that whilst they remained there, Mrs. Edenall's life was scarce worth an hour's purchase.

She reached home weary and anxious, filled with a new dread that was not altogether unhealthy for her, since it kept her from brooding upon the memories of the past few days. Poor Janet, it seemed as if her life were only given her to care for others, as if all of love and kindness that lay within her soul could only prove itself by suffering; suffering and patience, never anything else but these.

## CHAPTER X.



THE terrible accident at Norlands caused a great commotion in St. Olave's. The local papers were full of it, and loud were the encomiums bestowed on Janet and Mrs. Edenall for the disinterested kindness with which they had tended the unfortunate sufferer. The old Cathedral city could afford to recognize the existence of Miss Bruce now. In a few days, however, the excitement died away. People no longer came over from St. Olave's to visit the scene of the accident. The gossip which had been so rife about the dead man's name, his position, his probable wealth, and so forth, wore itself out, and in less than a fortnight the whole affair had

ceased to be mentioned, except as a landmark for some other event which it kept in remembrance.

But the curl of golden hair and the Ramsay scarf fluttered still from the withered ash tree branch.

Over and over again, attempts had been made to reach and bring them down. To descend from the Norlands side of the landslip was simply impossible; to climb up from the brink of the river below, equally so. Some had tried to sling them with a noose; the deftest marksmen among the St. Olave's officers had fired at them from boats on the river or from stations along the edge of the ravine, but no shot had leave to reach its aim. Through hail and lightning storms, through beating rain and driving wind they fluttered on still. It seemed as if some invisible Rispah kept watch over them and suffered neither heaven nor earth to blast these ghastly relics of the dead.

Day after day wore on. Janet longed to be back again at Westwood, both for her own sake and that Mrs. Edenall might be sheltered from the terrible memories that belonged to Norlands. Tibbie was written to, and a time fixed for her return. As soon as she had got all ready, they

would go back to the quiet little home, where, if they could not forget the past, its remembrance might not press so bitterly upon them. Janet grew more and more anxious about Mrs. Edenall. The terrible excitement of the last week or two, following so closely upon long weakness and ill-health, had been too much for her, and her mind was evidently giving way. Sometimes she was irritable and restless. For hours together she would pace up and down the long stone passage that led from the kitchen to the sitting-rooms, muttering to herself in low impatient whispers. At such times, Janet never left her for a moment. More than once, before they had learned to understand her ways, she had slipped out through the garden and got far away on the ravine path without being missed.

Once, she had quite reached the landslip, and Mrs. Cromarty going in search of her had found her stooping far over its edge, her eyes fixed with keen, hungry, quivering gaze on the scarf that was floating to and fro far away beneath.

At other times she was patient and passive, quiet as a little child. It seemed then as if all action or energy was quenched out of her nature.

Hour after hour she would lie on the sofa in the room where Douglas Ramsay died, twining one of her own long tresses of hair round and round her wan fingers, stroking it with a peaceful, patient smile, her lips moving all the while with unspoken words.

Dr. Greenwood came to see her, and advised her speedy return to Westwood. If she could be kept perfectly quiet for a few weeks the malady might be warded off, but every day at Norlands, he said, was hastening the crisis and rendering it less likely that the balance of reason could be preserved.

At last, it was towards the end of July—Tibbie came home again, and the Westwood house was prepared for their return. It was the closing day of their visit to Norlands. For more than a week Mrs. Edenall had been very quiet, quiet and passive. It seemed as if her excitement was gradually wearing away, and they hoped that years of peace might even yet be in store for her. Janet had been very busy most of the day, packing up their things ready for the return to Westwood next morning, and when all the preparations were completed she came down in her bonnet and cloak



to accompany Mrs. Edenall to the little church-yard at Norlands. One more visit they were to pay, before that place, with all its memories and associations, came to be laid away amongst the things of the past.

To her surprise the parlour was empty, so was Mrs. Edenall's bedroom. Then she went into the kitchen. Mrs. Cromarty was sitting reading in the trellised doorway that led out into the yard behind the house. She had seen Mrs. Edenall scarce half-an-hour before, walking quietly backwards and forwards in the orchard path. Janet sought her there, but no one answered to her call. She went back again into the parlour and waited for nearly an hour, listening for the tread of footsteps upon the gravel walk. None came. Then, with a chill sickening sense of danger at hand, she set off down the ravine path to Norlands.

She reached the landslip without meeting a creature. All was very still and peaceful. The sunlight lay in golden strips upon the yellowing corn-fields and crept in and out through the darkening glades of the fir-tree plantation which stretched away to the northern uplands. Very greyly upon the deepening eastern sky rose the rugged outline

of the Roman tower ; with a soft musical ripple the river Luthen gushed below, swaying the tall flag leaves as it went, and singing the white water-lilies to sleep upon its breast.

For awhile Janet paused, lulled into forgetfulness by the quiet beauty of the place. Ere she turned to go away, she leaned over the ravine for a last look at the death relics below. Perhaps it might be long before she saw them again. Steadying herself against the birch stem that grew upon the brink, she bent carefully forward.

There were the rifted rocks jutting out amongst the fern and brushwood, there the smooth earthy slope that shelved away down to the river below and browned the whiteness of its foam, there the lightning-blasted ash tree stretching out its lean and wrinkled arms ; but the curl of hair and the tartan scarf were gone, both gone. And clinging to a tuft of gorse close by, fluttered a tiny shred of black crape, which as Janet watched it was seized by the wind and borne aloft out of sight.

Chilled by a suspicion no longer vague or formless, she turned back towards the cottage, not even pausing as she passed the lonely spot where Douglas Ramsay's grave was greening in the

sunshine. As she neared the narrow path which led to the cottage garden, the clamour of voices smote upon her ear, and she noticed how the long meadow-grass by the hedge-side was bruised by the tramping of many feet. She pressed on half paralyzed with dread. A crowd of people had gathered round the parlour window, trying to peer through the crevices of the closed blinds. More were clustering round the entrance, some with vaguely curious, some with awe-struck faces. As Janet came forwards, they hushed their whispering and made a way for her to pass. The parlour door was closed and Mrs. Cromarty stood by it as if to prevent anyone from entering unawares.

"I'm feared you'll be very much shocked, Miss Bruce," she began, as Janet came forward.

"I know it all," said Janet, "let me go in."

Mrs. Cromarty opened the door and went in with her, locking it inside to keep out the more curious of the bystanders who were making their way into the house.

Once more the mattresses which gave Douglas Ramsay his death-couch had been brought down, and upon these lay Mrs. Edenall, dead, quite dead; one glance at the ashy stiffening face told that.

There was not a wound or a bruise upon her that they could see, but the position of the head, violently twisted back on one side, showed how and where she had found her death. The right hand was clenched over the lock of hair and the scarf, so tightly clenched that no force of theirs could open it. No cramp of pain distorted her face. Instead, there was a grand sweet smile of triumph just parting the lips, and smoothing into child-like calmness the low broad forehead. She could not have suffered much. Even as she grasped those coveted treasures the death-stroke must have come and fixed for ever upon her features the smile which the prize had given.

Mrs. Cromarty stood at the foot of the mattress, her bosom heaving with suppressed emotion; shadows now of sorrow and now of stern pitiless indignation, darkening her swarthy face.

"Poor lady," she said, "it's a rough carrying on she's had this long time past. The Lord send that she shall have rest and quiet at last, for she was more sinned against than sinning."

Janet looked sharply up. Their eyes met, Mrs. Cromarty's veiled with unshed tears.

"I knew her, ma'am; I wouldn't say it while

she was living, for it's small need there is to cast a poor body's sins in her face so long as she's a chance to mend; but she's gone now, and, ma'am, if I dont tell you, there's other folks 'll find it out afore long. I lived maid with her when she was a young leddy as bright and stainless as Miss Alice, and indeed, ma'am, them two mind me of each other."

Mrs. Cromarty waited for Miss Bruce to notice this last remark; she did so.

"Ah! Alice reminded you of Mrs. Edenall. I have been struck sometimes by a resemblance. Of course it is nothing. Alice has never hinted that Mistress Amiel Grey was even distantly connected with the family of Mrs. Edenall."

"No, ma'am, she has not. I was telling you I had lived maid with this lady. Her name was Brandon, Marian Brandon. Him as lies up yonder," and Mrs. Cromarty pointed towards Norlands, "ruined her, and she broke her father's heart."

"You had better not mention this, Mrs. Cromarty. It is not suspected in St. Olave's."

"No, ma'am, and if I can help it, it never shall. I've oft matched Mrs. Edenall and Marian Bran-

don in my own mind, but I never knowed 'em for the same while that day when I seed her bending over Mr. Ramsay and pouring out her kisses on his false face. He was one of the devil's own men, ma'am, was Douglas Ramsay, for all his face was fair to look upon."

"Hush, Mrs. Cromarty, we will not speak ill of the dead. He is gone now, and has carried all his sins into the presence of One who is sometimes more merciful than we are."

"You're in the right of it, ma'am, and I hope the Lord will forgive me if I've been more bitter on him than I ought to. But it freezes the charity out of one's soul, ma'am, to see a man deceive a young innocent girl, and turn her into a poor lorn creature like this; here and he walks God Almighty's earth with never a smirch on his brow, or a blush on his cheek. Ma'am, I were sore pressed to feel ought but glad when I was tending Mr. Ramsay's corpse, and knew him for the same as had ruined my young mistress."

Just then Colin opened the door and said that Dr. Greenwood was waiting.

He could do nothing but examine the body, and pronounce with certainty upon the nature of

the injury. An inquest was held next day, and a verdict of "accidental death" returned. The jury were of opinion that Mrs. Edenall had been walking too near the verge of the landslip, and losing her balance had fallen over. Also, that in her terror she had caught at the scarf to save herself from sliding down, and so loosened it and the tress of hair from the tree. Appended to this verdict was a recommendation that the City Commissioners should wall up the landslip, and prohibit the ravine path from public use.


Janet had other thoughts, though she never mentioned them. She guessed only too surely how the poor heart-broken creature had wandered there, and with the desperate daring of madness scaled the rocks step by step until the coveted prize was snatched; then, yielding to the mania which was at times so strong upon her, she had suffered herself to slide down the smooth, unbroken slope to certain death. But the reading public of St. Olave's endorsed the verdict of the jury, and nothing further was said.

This accident, following so closely upon the other, caused great commotion amongst the people, that is, the middle and lower classes of the com-

munity. But another event, much more noteworthy than the death of a comparative stranger, was just now transpiring in the midst of the goodly fellowship of the Close families, and to this we must turn.



## CHAPTER XI.

 SINCE Mistress Amiel Grey's death, everything at the Old Lodge had been conducted in its usual style. Indeed she had been so long withdrawn from the superintendence of her own household, that her removal could make but little real difference. Miss Luckie conducted the establishment with admirable energy and precision, whilst Mrs. Archdeacon Scrymgeour acted as chaperone in general to Alice, who was rapidly growing into a very charming woman, quite equal, Mrs. Scrymgeour proudly affirmed, to the exalted position she would so soon be called to assume.

The wedding was drawing very near. Cuth-

bert became daily more assiduous in his attentions. He loaded her with trifling little presents, offered with such exquisite tact and gracefulness, that Alice felt overpowered with gratitude; and had her dowry been counted by millions instead of thousands, it would have seemed to her innocent heart all too small to bring in exchange for the unfailing caresses and honeyed compliments which her betrothed lavished upon her with such open-handed profusion.

Already coming events cast their shadows before, in the shape of elaborate pieces of fancy work, which arrived at the Old Lodge from such of the Close families as were sufficiently intimate to offer wedding presents. The Bishop's lady had prepared a service of plate as a nuptial gift, and the costly articles were already reposing in that lady's boudoir, prior to being sent to the Old Lodge the night before the marriage. Mrs. Archdeacon Scrymgeour was just completing a magnificent banner screen of white satin, as her contribution to Grassthorpe Rectory, but as this article of furniture will make its appearance before the reader on a future occasion, it shall not be minutely described at present. For three weeks

past, the head milliner's rooms in High Street had been strewn with white tulle, dress lengths of silk, bouquets, wreaths, and ribbons; and day after day added fresh treasures to the store of exquisitely embroidered linen and silken-fine damask which was accumulating on Alice's behalf in the carved oak presses of the Old Lodge.

All was in readiness now for the arrival of Captain Clay, who was expected to act as guardian to the bride-elect. As soon as he came, the settlements were to be made, and the wedding-day fixed, and a few other little outstanding matters finally arranged.

Captain Clay had been abroad with his regiment nearly twenty years. During the whole of that time he had held no communication with Mistress Amiel Grey, beyond an occasional newspaper which had passed between them. He had seen the intelligence of her death in the "*Times*," and that hastened his journey home. He came by the overland route, for greater speed, and embarked at Marseilles in the "*Erebus*," which anchored off Southampton on the twenty-fifth of July, the day of Mrs. Edenall's death. He

started at once to St. Olave's, and in the evening of the succeeding day, Lettice ushered into the oriel room of the Old Lodge a sunburnt stranger, tall, and of soldier-like aspect.

He presented his card to Miss Luckie, who generally took the initiative in matters of hospitality. Her pretty little white satin cap ribbons fluttered with pleasurable excitement as she laid down her knitting and rose to receive him.

"Captain Clay, of the Lancers, lately serving in India, I presume."

The Captain bowed assent.

"We are most happy to see you. Independently of the auspicious event which your arrival heralds, any connection of Mistress Amiel Grey's is sure of a hearty welcome to the Old Lodge. Allow me to introduce you to Miss Alice Grey, niece of the late Mrs. Grey."

Captain Clay acknowledged the introduction with a somewhat perplexed expression of countenance, and withheld the cousinly greeting which Miss Luckie imagined he would have offered to the blushing girl before him. But then they had never met before, and he might not be prepared

for such a vision of beauty. Alice had lost but little of her old shyness in the presence of strangers, and slipped quietly out of the room as soon as the formidable introduction was fairly over.

"Did I understand you rightly, that the young lady who has left the room is the niece of Mrs. Amiel Grey?" said the Captain, seating himself on one of the softly-cushioned lounges.

"Perfectly so," replied Miss Luckie. "You have been absent many years and are not aware, I suppose, that from infancy Miss Alice has been brought up by her aunt, to whom she was most devotedly attached. Indeed, she was Mrs. Grey's only comfort during the later years of her life."

"It is twenty years since I set foot in England, and I imagine many changes must have taken place in the interval. Am I correct in supposing that this is the Old Lodge, formerly used as a residence by the Canons of St. Olave's Cathedral, and that the lady recently deceased is the widow of the late Dean Grey?"

"Certainly, sir; you are quite correct in all the particulars you have named," said Miss Luckie, who began to think that the visitor had left his intellects in the Punjaub, and was not likely to

prove much of an acquisition to poor Alice. He was so exceedingly cold and unsympathetic in his manner.

"Then, madam," he continued stiffly, "there must be a mistake somewhere. My cousin, Mrs. Amiel Grey, was the only child of Sir Ralph Grisby, of Runnington, in Kent, and the late Dean Grey, her husband, was also an only child. I am perplexed, therefore, as to the relationship assumed by the young lady to whom you have done me the honour of introducing me."

So was Miss Luckie, now. It was an awkward circumstance, a very awkward circumstance. Still she had no doubt it would be properly cleared up. Alice's relationship to Mrs. Grey was an undoubted fact; of that there could be no question. Had it not been patent to the world for the last eighteen years, during which time not a whisper had been breathed to the contrary? But whilst she was turning the affair over in her own mind, the Captain continued—

"In fact, madam—excuse me, but I have not the pleasure of knowing your name."

"I am Miss Luckie, only surviving daughter of the late Major Luckie of the Forty-seventh."

Captain Clay bowed with military precision.

"In fact, Miss Luckie, when I read the account of my cousin's death in the '*Times*,' I hastened my journey from India, in order that before any difficulties should have arisen, I might lay before the legal advisers of Mrs. Grey, my claims as heir-at-law. I have brought certain documents with me," here Captain Clay produced from the breast of his coat a packet of suspicious-looking blue papers, "and my solicitor in town holds himself in readiness to support my claims should any dispute arise. Such dispute, however, is not likely to take place, since I believe I am correct in representing myself as the sole surviving relative of Mistress Amiel Grey."

Miss Luckie twitched nervously at her knitting-needles. The affair was growing serious. Still the worst result that suggested itself to her imagination, was, that this unwelcome interloper might secure to himself a small portion of the estate. The bare idea of his claiming the whole of it was too enormous to be entertained for a moment. At last, she thought it would be better to turn the stranger over to Cuthbert Scrymgeour's management. He would hold his own at any rate, no.

fear of that. So, after a little consideration, during which Captain Clay had been criticizing the fine oak furniture and choice paintings of the oriel room, she began again—

“I am not in a position to enter upon this subject with you, at present, having only lately become a resident in the family. Since the stroke which preceded Mrs. Grey's death, and which entirely precluded her from the active management of her own affairs, I have resided with Miss Alice as companion and protector. Of all private family affairs connected with the Old Lodge, I am quite ignorant. Perhaps you are not aware that Miss Alice contemplates marriage?”

Captain Clay was not, and signified the same.

“She has been engaged for some months to a clergyman in this neighbourhood. Indeed, the ceremony has only been delayed until such time as you could arrive and agree upon the settlements to be made.”

“I am happy to congratulate Miss Alice upon her prospects,” replied the Captain. “My claims as Mrs. Grey's heir-at-law may possibly interfere with the proposed settlements, but I trust they will in no other way affect the young lady's happiness.”



Miss Luckie was not quite so sure of that, but she preferred not venturing upon the subject, and recommended an interview with Mr. Scrymgeour, who was expected from Grassthorpe that evening.

"In the meantime, Captain Clay, I trust you will remain with us for the night."

He smiled inwardly at the notion of being invited to take a bed in his own house, but accepted the offer as it was made, in perfect politeness. And so the ominous *tête-à-tête* terminated.

Meanwhile Alice had strolled into the drawing-room, her little heart all in a flutter at the sudden arrival of Captain Clay, and the important event of which that arrival was the harbinger. The *ormolu* clock on the marble bracket was just upon the stroke of seven. Cuthbert could not possibly arrive before eight, and the time until he came appeared so long. She sat down at the window that looked into the Close, and amused herself for some time by watching the groups of smartly-dressed tradesmen's wives that were sauntering about after their day's work was over. By-and-by the bells began to ring, jangling out with confused resonant clang from the old grey belfry tower. It was the weekly practising night. The sound of

them turned her thoughts back to that evening, now nearly five months ago, when she and David Bruce had watched Aunt Amiel die. Then, farther and farther back they drifted to that other evening, when Janet had come to tea and they had beguiled the time by turning over the contents of the old cabinet that stood in the deep recess between the windows.

It stood there yet, just in the same place. Things were rarely shifted out of their places at the Old Lodge.

To wile away a little more of the time until Cuthbert came, she bethought herself of turning it out again. She went upstairs to get the key from the jewel case, and then drawing the quaint old-fashioned piece of furniture in front of the sofa, she opened it. Just within the lid lay the manuscript which Aunt Amiel had placed there the day of her illness. It bore the superscription :—

“To my foster child, Alice. To be read after my death.”

That brought the quick tears to Alice's eyes; and for awhile she buried her face in her hands whilst a rush of tender memories swept over her. But she soon recovered herself, and breaking the

many seals which secured the outer cover, she began to read. As she opened the packet, a little old yellow note fell out; this she put back again into the cabinet, thinking it had got in by mistake.

She read it slowly, pausing often with the perplexed look of one who is working out some difficult problem. But, however perplexed she might be, no shade of sadness came over her fair young face. Not a thought crossed her mind that anything written there could shake *his* truth, or dim his love for her. She had never learned yet to doubt the faith of any human being.

She was yet reading, when the door opened, and Cuthbert Scrymgeour stole quietly in. His foot-fall was very gentle, and she did not hear him until he came behind her and laid his hand upon her shoulder. Then she turned quickly round. He pressed a kiss, another and yet another, upon the flushed face upturned in glad surprise to him.

"Sit by me, will you," she said, nestling up to him in her pretty caressing way; and she made room for him on the sofa.

He passed his fingers—those beautiful white fingers—lightly over her forehead.

"What is my little pet knitting her brow over? Is she beginning to study mathematics or the square root, or is it a new crochet pattern, a cover for my study chair at Grassthorpe, Alice?"

Oh, how musical that voice was; how far above singing its dainty love-modulated tones! Alice blushed to the tips of her little fingers.

"No, Cuthbert, it's a letter from Aunt Amiel that I've just found in this old cabinet, and I can't make it out; it seems so strange."

"Does it? Well, I'll try if I can help you to make sense of it. Alice, there's a portmanteau in the hall; who does it belong to?"

"Captain Clay," Alice faltered out. "He has just come."

Cuthbert bent his head over her. Their eyes met, and once more the rosy flood mounted to cheek and brow. She was going to start away from him, but he put his arm round her and kept her there.

"No, little lady-bird, I shall not let you fly away just yet. Fold up those pretty wings now, and let us see what we can bring out of this ugly old letter."

He made her sit down again beside him, his arm still round her; and they began to read the letter. Perhaps we had better do so too.

## CHAPTER XII.



Y dear Alice,—The time has now come when it is needful for you to be put in possession of certain facts which have hitherto been carefully concealed from you.

“Whilst you were a child, it was useless to give you information which could then have no meaning for you. But now that womanhood is bringing with it graver responsibilities, and you may soon become a wife——”

Alice glanced shyly up to Cuthbert, and nestled her little hand into his. He held it in a clasp—well, somewhat slighter than might have been given five minutes ago, and a thought crossed his mind that it would have been much better if Mistress Amiel Grey had made her will before that

unlucky stroke came. But the Scrymgeours were always remarkable for caution. They went on reading :—

“ It is my duty to tell you somewhat of your previous history and parentage. You may have heard me say that the late Dean Grey had connections in Scotland. A few years after our marriage, which is now more than fifty years ago, I accompanied him on a visit to his friends, and remained some months in the neighbourhood of Perth. Part of the time was spent with the Ramsays, of Glen Ramsay, between whom and my late husband a strong attachment existed. Their eldest son, then a little fellow of five years old, was a great favourite of mine. He was a beautiful little boy with sparkling blue eyes, and the peculiar golden hair which is rarely found except in Scotland. But he was very much spoilt, and I discerned in him, even then, seeds of passions which might afterwards ripen into very bitter results, not only for himself, but those in any way connected with him. And so it afterwards proved.”

“ Stay Alice, you are pressing on my arm.” She leaned forward for a moment, and Cuthbert took his arm away. He did not give her the sup-

port of it any more that night. But her hand was in his still.

"I lost sight of him for many years, and when next I heard of him he had formed an engagement with a most estimable young lady, whose name I forget. I remember, however, that she resided near Perth. I believe also that she belonged to a good but not very wealthy family.

"Some years after—it is about eighteen years ago now—I was staying in my native county, Kent, at Brandon Hall. At that time Colonel and Mrs. Brandon were in deep affliction. Their only child, a lovely and most elegant girl, had just been inveigled into a clandestine flight with a stranger to whom Colonel Brandon had shown hospitality. She had then been absent from them nearly six months, during which time they had heard no tidings of her. I found to my inexpressible grief and indignation that the wretch for whom she had thus quitted the shelter of her parents' roof was this Douglas Ramsay, my former little child friend. I was the more grieved for the great sorrow which I knew his conduct must have caused to the young lady in Scotland, with whose affections he had so basely trifled.



"Mrs. Brandon was in very delicate health at the time I visited them. The conduct of her child had greatly distressed her, and shortly after I left she died. Colonel Brandon never recovered her loss. They were most devotedly attached, and this was the first blight that had fallen upon their domestic happiness. I never saw Marian Brandon, but I have heard that she was a splendid girl, tall, distinguished, most regal in her bearing, but of an imperious disposition and passionate to a fault. Not many weeks after my return to the Old Lodge, she came home, deserted by the man for whom she had given up name and fame and all that a woman holds dear. Mr. Ramsay deceived her by a mock marriage. At least I believe the marriage was legal, but he purposely destroyed the lines, and so rendered it impossible for her to prove herself his wife, there being no witnesses of the ceremony except the party who performed it, and he is long since dead.

"Marian Brandon found her father at the point of death. She returned home in time to close his eyes, but not to receive his forgiveness; for the Colonel, though kind, was a stern man and firm to obstinacy in his prejudices. After his death, she

gave birth to a child. Then, worn out with the grief and anxiety through which she had passed, her mind gave way, and for some months she was under restraint. On her recovery, feeling that she had too far disgraced herself ever to return to the society in which she had once moved, and being utterly disowned by her relatives, she left the neighbourhood and has never been heard of since. I imagine she is dead, or possibly living a life of shame.

“My heart was touched for the child thus left friendless and dependent, and having no family of my own, I offered to adopt it, on condition that it should be given into my sole charge, and that its parents should at no future time claim any control over it. These conditions were complied with, and a little more than seventeen years ago, the helpless infant came under my roof.

“Alice, you are that child. Since then, I have cared for and tended you as my own. I have endeavoured to give you all the advantages of my own position, and to remove as far as possible the stain which was fixed upon your birth. From the first, it was understood in St. Olave's, and I have suffered the impression to exist, that you were a niece of

mine, left orphaned and unprotected. Hitherto it has been of no moment that this idea should be removed. It is now due, however, to the individual who may afterwards become your husband, that the circumstances of your parentage should be revealed.

"I have just had an interview with Mr. Cuthbert Scrymgeour, in which he seeks you as his wife.

"I was not prepared to lose you so soon after your entrance into society. I have no right, however, to retain you longer with me, nor would my affection permit me for one moment to prevent you from forming a connection which is likely to advance your real happiness. Mr. Scrymgeour's proposal has taken me by surprise. I cannot at once decide on the best course to pursue. He will come to me again to-morrow to receive my final answer. Then I shall explain to him the circumstances which I have now detailed to you. Should they influence him against the marriage, I have no doubt that as a man of honour he will hold them strictly private. Should he, as I believe he will, prize his love more dearly than any scruples of rank or position, you will learn the particulars of your history from his own lips at some future time.

"Knowing, however, how uncertain life is, and feeling the infirmities of age stealing rapidly upon me, I have judged it well to write this explanation. I shall also send for my solicitor again tomorrow,—I summoned him last week, but he was from home—to make arrangements as regards my property, of which I intend to leave you sole heiress. The circumstances of your birth render you void in law, and, therefore, without this precaution you might be left at my decease entirely unprovided for."

"And this will hasn't turned up, Alice."

"No, Cuthbert," said Alice, in her unsuspecting innocence. "You know poor Aunt Amiel was taken with the stroke the very day she wrote this, and she was never able to attend to anything again."

"Confound it! so she was. What a fool I have been! Well, go on, Alice."

Alice looked quietly up into his face.

"You are not angry with me, are you, Cuthbert? Have I said anything wrong?"

"No, no, child; just go on as I tell you. It's desperately hot in this room; I declare I'm half smothered: don't sit quite so close to me."

He edged himself away from her, and dropped the hand which until then he had held in his.

"Let us get the thing finished," he said, impatiently.

"By placing my property in your hands, I shall do no wrong to any of my own family. I have outlived all my relatives save one, my cousin, Captain Clay. We never held much intercourse with each other, and, for the last twenty years, he has been serving with his regiment in India. He is, besides, a man of considerable private fortune, and therefore not dependent on anything he might receive from me.

"When you were sent to me, seventeen years ago, there came, with the rest of your clothing, a Venetian head ornament, a cordon of pearls, brought from Italy by one of the Brandon family, who was formerly Consul at Venice. You wore it at Chapter Court last night. It is the only memento you possess of your mother, and I should like you to take care of it. She erred very deeply, but she is your mother still.

"I do not know that I need add anything further to this letter. I may have been mistaken

in keeping you and my St. Olave's friends so long ignorant of the circumstances it discloses. \* However that may be, it is too late to remedy the evil, except as I have now done. May God bless you, Alice! You have always been tender and true to me. Great has been my delight in you. Should Cuthbert Scrymgeour become your husband, I trust he will find the wife bear out the character of the child. Should the facts I shall relate to him in the morning influence him to withdraw from his proposal, I shall still rejoice that Providence spares you to me a little longer.

"Your affectionate foster-mother,

"AMIEL GREY."

## CHAPTER XIII.



WHAT does it mean, Cuthbert?" said Alice, when the letter was finished. "I don't seem to understand it at all."

"It means this, Alice, that you are no niece of Mistress Amiel Grey's, but an illegitimate child of a woman named Marian Brandon; and that, in consequence of your aunt having died intestate——"

"Died in what, Cuthbert?"

"Died without a will; the whole of the property goes to the heir-at-law, this Captain Clay, who, it seems, has come to put in his claim to it."

"You are not going, Cuthbert, are you?" said

Alice, as he threw the paper on the table and began to pace the room impatiently. Her face was full of bewilderment, but there was no fear in it.

"Going! why, I suppose I can't do anything else much. I don't exactly see how I can stop here philandering, when that fellow Clay is walking off with the house and all it contains."

"But, Cuthbert, he is not going to walk off with me."

"You're a little goose, Alice," said the B.A., coming up to her in spite of himself, and pressing a hasty kiss on her cheek. "But I must be off, and see what the man's after."

"Come back to me soon, then; don't be long, Cuthbert; it is so dull without you."

Alice could not catch his answer, as he strode hastily out of the room. But she was content. He was not vexed with her; he had called her a little goose, and she was quite sure he would not have done that if he had been angry. So she sat down on the sofa again, and waited patiently until such time as it should please her lord and master elect to return.

"A pretty mess!" said Cuthbert Scrymgeour



to himself, as he crossed the hall to the oriel room. "What a lucky chance it is the affair didn't happen a month later! I suppose I couldn't have backed out of it then, and it won't be the pleasantest thing in the world having it to do now."

He knocked at the door; there was no answer. Then he went in; the room was empty. Miss Luckie had gone out to give orders about supper and sleeping accommodation, and, as he strolled through the room to the half-open glass door, Cuthbert saw Captain Clay sauntering up and down the garden, smoking a cigar with the easy, self-possessed air of a man who knows the world is going the right way for him.

"Insufferable fellow!" muttered the amiable divine; and then, instead of going back to Alice, he took up his hat and set off to Chapter Court, for the purpose of consulting his aunt on the awkward aspect of affairs.

Cuthbert Scrymgeour's affections were made to match his mind—of the delicate spring annual kind, planted or pulled up at a moment's notice. Perhaps, also, the frequent falling of their leaves enriched the ground after a fashion, and prepared

it for a fresh crop. The halo of fascination which had shrined Alice Grey, cleared off in a twinkling; she was a very ordinary mortal now. And then he began to condole with himself. He had been grossly deceived, no one could deny that; made the dupe of a pretty face and false expectations, very nearly inveigled into uniting himself—his splendid person, his unblemished pedigree, his social status, his melodious voice—with a penniless dependant, a girl who had not even a name to call her own. How providential that the *éclaircissement* happened just when it did! that the Scrymgeour family had escaped such a bar-sinister on its quartering. Mr. Scrymgeour was lost in thanksgiving.

He was awakened from this mental reverie of praise by stumbling suddenly upon the iron palisadings of Chapter Court. He opened the heavy oaken door with his latch key, and went into the dining-room. No one was there, so he rang the bell, and desired the waiting-maid to inform her mistress of his presence. As he paced the long stately room in silence and alone, the thought of Blanche Egerton floated through his mind. Blanche, with her millionaire grandsire, her

dreamy eyes, her bland, delicious dignity, her centuries of Norman blood, her well attested baptismal register and armorial bearings. Cuthbert's mind was made up.

The Archdeacon's widow counselled prudence.

"Prudence, my dear Cuthbert, prudence. Do nothing rashly. Beware of committing yourself before the claims of this Captain Clay are recognized by law. At all events a legal consultation must be held before any steps can be taken towards dispossessing Alice of her property. If it is satisfactorily ascertained that such a stain as you have mentioned rests upon her parentage, withdraw from the connection. I give you my fullest sanction to such a step. I waive pecuniary considerations, Cuthbert; my mind rises superior to them, but the Scrymgeour name shall never be tarnished by contact with ignoble blood."

And then the Archdeacon's widow, who disapproved of excitability, smoothed down the folds of her *moire antique*, and leaned back in her velvet cushioned chair, the incarnation of ecclesiastical dignity.

Captain Clay was prepared for opposition. He

despatched a telegraphic message to town, and by ten o'clock next morning his legal adviser arrived at the Old Lodge, bringing the necessary documents. Mrs. Grey's man of business was also summoned. A lengthy consultation took place between them in the presence of Miss Luckie and Cuthbert Scrymgeour. The claims of Captain Clay were proved to be correct. He was indeed the heir-at-law, and, as such, entitled to the sole possession of the Old Lodge, the estate at Norlands, with the property in High Street, held by leasehold from the Dean and Chapter. The close of the all-important conference left Alice a beggar, absolutely penniless, and dependent for bread and lodging on a man upon whom she had not the slightest claim.

When all was over, Cuthbert, without waiting for an interview with his betrothed, went off to communicate the result to Mrs. Scrymgeour, at Chapter Court. Miss Luckie undertook to inform Alice of her altered position.

And indeed the kind-hearted little maiden-lady herself shared in the general wreck, for she had relinquished her claim upon the apartments in the Low Gardens, together with the little annuity

pertaining thereto; and her sole subsistence now was derived from her stipend as manager-general at the Old Lodge. So that her future was almost as dark as Alice's, except that she had influential friends in the city, who would exert themselves to place her in a position of comfort equal to that which she had given up to attend upon Mrs. Grey.

As for Alice, she scarcely seemed as yet to realize her situation. She had not seen Cuthbert since the previous evening, when he had quitted her so abruptly. She had a vague notion of some money loss connected with the sudden appearance of Captain Clay, but that this loss, even if it did come to pass, could in any way affect Cuthbert's feelings towards her, was a result which she never for one moment suspected. Had Mr. Scrymgeour been dislodged from his preferment at a moment's notice, Alice would have loved him all the same. It would not have entered her mind that in doing this she was acting the heroine, or displaying any extraordinary amount of affection. And so, in the calm consciousness of a faithful heart, she waited patiently for him to come and tell her that all was well.

A little goose, was she not?—just as Cuthbert had said, when he gave her that farewell kiss last night. But remember, she was not yet nineteen, and had lived all her life with a guileless, unsuspecting old lady, who had tried very hard to teach her the golden rule of doing as she would be done by. And succeeded too; nay, more than this, the little goose—I am afraid, as the world goes now, we cannot call her anything but a goose—had got the notion that every one else acted on the same principle, and would mete into her bosom the same overflowing measure which she was so ready to give. Poor little Alice!

The oriel room had been monopolized all day for the legal consultation, so after luncheon she stole away to her own little sanctum, the cozy study on the west side of the hall, where that first memorable interview with Cuthbert Scrymgeour had been held.

Thither in due time Miss Luckie came, bearing tidings of the poverty that had overtaken them.

“My dear child,” said the compassionate little lady, “all is lost. The house, furniture, property,

everything belongs to Captain Clay. He is proved to be the heir-at-law, and we cannot hinder him from taking possession at once."

She expected Alice would have screamed, or burst into tears, or gone into a fainting fit. Indeed, by way of being prepared for the last emergency, she had put a fresh supply of pungent salts into her smelling-bottle before she came into the room. But to her surprise, the young girl was quite calm. She simply appeared to be in a maze of bewilderment.

"Then it isn't true, Miss Luckie; I am not Aunt Amiel's niece, and I don't belong to her at all!"

"Not at all, my dear."

"Then do tell me how it is, for I can't understand it."

"The fact is simply this, Alice. You are the daughter of a lady—at least, I mean a person who was betrayed into an elopement with a wicked and abandoned man. Mrs. Grey took you when you were quite a little baby, and has brought you up ever since. The people about here always thought that you were her niece, and there seemed no need to correct the report, [especially as the real facts were so very unpleasant."

“ And the person, my mamma, Miss Luckie ?”

“ No one knows anything about her, Alice ; she disgraced herself beyond recovery.”

“ But she is my mamma still. It doesn't make any difference about her not being good. If I could find her, I should like to be kind to her. Wouldn't it be right ?”

“ My dear, I don't venture an opinion. I wouldn't for the world say anything that is not scriptural ; but at any rate she has never acted as a parent to you, and all your obligations are centred upon Mrs. Grey.”

“ Yes ; dear Aunt Amiel ! But I suppose I must not call her Aunt Amiel now. How strange it seems ! And so the Old Lodge doesn't belong to me, and I have nothing to live upon, nothing at all. But you, Miss Luckie, what will you do ? Oh ! I am so sorry ! You gave up your pleasant home to be kind to me, and now we have both of us lost everything.” And at the thought of Miss Luckie's destitution, Alice, for the first time, began to look seriously troubled.

“ Don't distress yourself about me, darling,” said Miss Luckie, drawing Alice nearer to her, “ I have a great many influential friends in the army,



and I have no doubt they will do their best to get me back my settlement at the Low Gardens."

"Or, you know," and Alice's face brightened, "you could come and live with us at Grassthorpe. Cuthbert cares for me still, and it won't make a bit of difference to him, my losing the money. You know I should love him just the same if he hadn't anything at all."

Miss Luckie could not help kissing the rosy lips which were wreathed into a smile so faithful and loving; but she was not sure, after all, that the rule would work both ways. Just then, Lettice brought in a somewhat bulky looking letter.

"Please, ma'am, this has come for Miss Grey."

Alice's eyes glistened as she recognized the familiar handwriting.

"Ah, it is from Cuthbert! How kind of him to write so soon! He thought I should be troubled, and so he wants to comfort me, but I wish he had come instead; it is so pleasant to see him."

She opened the cover. Miss Luckie caught sight of two or three dainty little pink edged envelopes within, and divining too truly what they meant, slipped quietly out of the room that Alice might be alone.

They were the child's own letters and the bands she had worked for him, sent back with a polite note by Cuthbert Scrymgeour.

## CHAPTER XIV.



WHILST the oriel room was the scene of grave consultation between the lawyers, a second colloquy, quite as animated, if not so portentous, had been going on in the culinary regions. Colin, in his striped waistcoat and shiny buttons, was seated on the table, alternately haranguing the assembled maids, and excavating the tasty recesses of a plum-pie set before him by Symons, the cook, in return for the still more tasty intelligence which he had rushed from Norlands to communicate. Mrs. Marris was there too, in her black silk bonnet and octogenarian shawl. She often stepped down in an afternoon, after returning from the Minster prayers, to have

a "crack," as she termed it, with the servants, or pick up stray bits of gossip which found their way into the culinary department.

A pleasant, roomy old spot was the front kitchen at the Lodge. A huge open fire-place stretched across one end, with a seat in the chimney corner, the cosiest place in the whole house on winter nights. There was no fire now though, and in its place an earthenware jar of asparagus leaves, mint, sweet-peas, and snap-dragons, filled the wide grate. The low roof was panelled with oak, dark and cool in summer time, but rare for flashing back December firelight from its deep groovings. A lattice window, almost every pane written over with names or devices, looked out into the back garden, and past that to the Monastery ruins and the river Luthen. A few scraps of fanciful carving still lingered here and there round the wainscotting and doorposts; old coats of arms, mottoes, groups of flowers, or queer grotesque faces, half-brute, half-human, such as one sees beneath cathedral gargoyles. In the open doorway, nicely placed to catch the sunlight that crept through flickering elm tree leaves, lay a sedate, matronly tortoiseshell cat, winking peacefully at the gambols of her

kittens on the little bit of grass plot before the door.

It was late in the afternoon. The work—what little there was of it, for they kept no company at the Old Lodge—had been finished an hour ago, and since then, the maids in their neat gowns of lilac print, and white linen aprons, had been chatting over their sewing. Colin was telling them about Mrs. Edenall; it was only the day after her death. With a few vigorous strokes he had dashed off the leading features of the catastrophe, and was now filling in the particulars with a few additions from imagination.

“Did you see her, Colin? was she smashed awful?” said the kitchen-maid, who had a taste for horrors.

“Not a bit. She just lay white and still, as if she'd been cut out o' marble, nobbut her head hung queer like, and she'd got them things in her hand as tight as tight. I seed Miss Bruce a trying to pull 'em out, but it warn't no yield.”

“What things, Colin?”

“Why, yon screed of hair and the scarf t'other poor gentleman left hanging upo' the ash tree branch; them as the barrack officers tried to fire at and couldn't hit 'em.”

"Poor thing!" and Symons wiped her eyes with her white apron. "I lay it gave her a sickening feel to see 'em hanging out there, and so she thought she'd climb down and fetch 'em off; my, she didn't know what the Norlands landslip was though, or she wouldn't ha' tried! I reckon it would ha' gived me a turn to see 'em myself. I pities folks as has tender feelins."

"I lay Miss Bruce will be glad to be clean shut on her, though," said the kitchen-maid, "I've heerd tell she has been awful flighty of late; hasn't she, Colin?"

"I don't go to say what she used to be, but she's just as gentle as a lamb since she came to Norlands. She was allers giving of me sixpences and shillings to keep yon poor gentleman's grave tidy; it cut her up his gettin' killed, it did; but I never seed as Miss Bruce made much count on it. She used to be a deal tenderer though to Mrs. Edenall sin' it happened."

"She's good to everybody, is Miss Bruce; but law, Colin, she must be awful skeered now."

"She is that. I clean pities for her, I does. If she was to lay her down side by side wi'

Mrs. Edenall, you couldn't tell which was which, she looks so white and cold like."

There was a pause; the maids went on with their sewing, and Colin helped himself to a fresh wedge of pie. By-and-by he said demurely—

"Her name ain't Mrs. Edenall. It never were."

"Bless us!" said the women in a breath, "what did they call her then? Did you ever? Do tell."

Colin winked mischievously. "Now, the curiosity of female people," was all the reply he vouchsafed to this unanimous request.

"Take that for your imperence, sir" and the cook darted forward and gave him a ringing box on the ear. Colin, in nowise daunted, returned it by another which tore off half her cap border.

"Never heed, Mrs. Symons," said Lettice, "you'll get a new one at the wedding. I lay we'll all be smart enough then. Are you looking to get aught, Mrs. Marris?"

"Why, I don't misdoubt but Miss Alice 'll behave handsome to the alms-people, happen a gownpiece or summut to make a cloak on. Marry, she's the money, and she don't care to spare it, bless her! When is it to be?"

"Miss Luckie telled me they was nobbut waiting for this here gentleman as comed yesterday, so I reckon we shall soon get agate. Mrs. Cromarty's had the muslin curtains done up this good bit past, and the best linen bleached, what Mrs. Amiel kept i' the great oak chest."

"I don't much matter yon gentleman, Captain what do they call him. He goes about with over much of a swing," continued Lettice. "He couldn't stick himself up more if all t' place was his own. He sent for me in a bit since to take 'em some wine yonder into t' room, an' ordered t' best sort. He's no gentleman, he isn't, to help hisself to other folk's things that way."

"What were they doing of, Lettice?" said Mrs. Symons, "they've been agate ever since noon, and they're at it yet; is it settlements or summut?"

"It's summut Mr. Scrymgeour don't like, I'll warrant; he looked reg'lar savage. I always said he were a viewly young man, but my, I wouldn't care to sit nigh hand him if that's the way he's going to look when he gets bonnie Miss Alice."

"Maybe they're tying him over fast, so as he can't lay his hands on the money. I kind o' misdoubted Mr. Cuthbert had an eye to Miss



Alice's fortune. She's a awful screw is the Arch-deacon's widdy, and she's put him up to that wedding as sure as I'm a living woman."

"I believe you're right," said Mrs. Marris. "I think if I was a man I should sort o' shame to let a woman put the meat into my pie, that way; but some folks thinks one way and some thinks another, and them as hasn't money does well to creep up other folks sleeves as has. And so you say the weddin's nigh hand, Lettice."

"You'd say same yourself, Mrs. Marris, if you seed what a sight o' frilled linen and worked petticoats and things Miss Alice has got ready. A poor widdy woman as lives in the back College yard made 'em all. I telled Miss Alice—you see she sets great store by me, cause I've waited of her so long—I telled her there was a grand shop in the High Street kept them sort o' things, and had the beautifullest patterns. My sister as lives maid with the Bishop's lady, said Miss Standish got all hers there when she were married; but nothing would serve Miss Alice but letting the widdy make 'em, cause she had seen better days, and was hard set to get victuals."

"That's just marry to everything else that Miss

Alice does, bless her! And do you know what she's goin' to be in?"

"Of course I do. Miss Alice talks to me like anything about her wedding; she says to me, Lettice, we must do this, and we must do that, before I get married, and she smiles and looks so bonnie while I wish I had a follower too. But St. Olave's isn't much of a place for followers; it's over scarce of men. She's to be in white silk, with puffings of tulle and little sprigs of green leaves laid in betwixt 'em, sprinkled over with summut as looks like dewdrops. And she's to have her hair in ringlets, with a wreath of green leaves, and a tulle veil; not lace, you know, that's over common for quality since Miss Baker at the cheese shop was married in a Brussels lace square, but beautiful clear white silk net, gathered round her head and floating about like a cloud. And then the bridesmaids is to be in white muslin wi' little purple flowers."

"They'll look just like heavenly angels then," said the kitchen-maid, who had listened with open mouth to Lettice's voluminous description. "Mrs. Amiel Grey once gived me a ticket to see a picture of the New Jerusalem comin' down from

heaven, which was bein' showed here, and she was in white muslin, with purple spots; leastways, that was what it looked like. But I ax yer pardon, Mrs. Symons, you was a-goin' to say summut."

"I were only wanting Colin to tell us what they called that there lady up at Norlands, if her name isn't Mrs. Edenall."

But Colin chose to stand upon his dignity.

"I don't go to gratify female folk's curiosity as skelps me on my ears."

"Whisht, whisht, lad, it ain't no yield for youngsters like you to quarrel with their bread an' cheese;" Mrs. Symons's hand was upon the plum pie, a moment more and it would have disappeared from his longing eyes into the shadowy recesses of the larder. Colin wisely resolved to put his dignity into his pocket.

"Hold hard, missis, just hand that pie back again and I'll tell ye all I know."

Mrs. Symons replaced the pie with a triumphant smile, and Colin opened his budget.

"I heered it onawares when I went to tell 'em Dr. Greenwood was come. Miss Bruce telled Mrs. Cromarty she wasn't to let on about it, 'cause

nobody in St. Olave's knew, but if folk's real names isn't to be spoke, I don't see what is. Miss Bruce was a bendin' over her, over Mrs. Edenall I mean, it were just after she'd gotten killed, and Mrs. Cromarty was standin' stiff upright like a statty, nigh hand her, and she said, did Mrs. Cromarty, as how she'd seed her afore; she'd lived maid with her when she were a young leddy, and her name wasn't Mrs. Edenall at all, but Marian Brandon."

"Marian what?" said Mrs. Marris.

"Marian Brandon, granny, what's got yer ears?"

Mrs. Marris was too much absorbed in her own reflections to resent this juvenile impertinence.

"Marian Brandon?" she exclaimed, bringing down her hand upon her knee with a resonant thump, which startled puss and made her spring right into the middle of the grass plot, much to the astonishment of the kittens, who were disporting thereon. "Marian Brandon, yes, that was the name. I mind it now as clear as owt. Mrs. Cromarty was tellin' me about it a good bit past, but I just let it slip out o' my intellects 'cause it warn't a name as I'd heered afore. A rare beautiful young lady Mrs. Cromarty said she was, wi' curlin'

hair and a glint in her een just for all the world like Miss Alice; and she came to shame wi' nought but her fair looks. Beauty an' misery, beauty an' misery, that's the way in this here world. I won't go to say it certain, but it lies strong upo' my mind as a baby comed afterwards."

Mrs. Symons put on a look of virtuous asperity, and told Colin to go and finish his pie in the back kitchen.

"No wonder, indeed," she said, "that Miss Bruce didn't wish the facts to expire in St. Olave's, but for my part I think folks as disgraces themselves that way ought to be publicly transposed, for a warning to their sex. Babies is plentiful enough in the world without more comin' as hasn't a name to their backs, and nothin' but shame to get a livin' with."

"Ay, marry, but to think of Mrs. Edenall, with her proud, stiff ways, belonging to that sort! I mind once, it's nigh half a year ago now, she came to my place in such a flusterment—you know I used to get her things up for her—about a handkerchief as had got sent in a mistake. Laws, I never seed anybody so flustered i' my life. 'Mrs.

Marris, says she—she spoke dainty and soft-like, but her face was as white as a chorister's surplice —‘ I believe you've got a handkerchief that has been put in unawares with my clothes.’ Well, ma'am, I said, I an't looked in among 'em yet, but they're all there, and I pointed to a basket nigh hand the copper, you can see for yourself. Well, Mrs. Symons, she flew to that basket like mad, and mercy on us if you'd seen how she tewed among t' things, clawing 'em over wi' such a vengeance. At last she gived a sort o' little squeak, and then hushed it up sharp, and turned to me just as cold and stiff-like as ever. ‘ Mrs. Marris,’ says she, ‘ I've found it, thank you,’ and I just seed it in her hand afore she got it crammed into her pocket. It was rare and viewly, the beautifullest thing ever I seed, all broidered round, and a grand fandangement in the corner, with a name, Marian Brandon, put on wi' satin stitch, same pattern as Mistress Amiel Grey, you know, used to work. I ain't thought of it since then; I didn't misdoubt it was one she'd gotten lent and was feared o' losin' it; but I sees it clear now. It was her own name as she'd brought shame upon.”

"It's obnoxious," said Mrs. Symons, "it's perfectly obnoxious; and to think of a quiet, harmless lady like Miss Bruce harbouring such vermin!"

Miss Luckie was passing the open door, and caught the last sentence.

"What is that, Symons?"

"It's Mrs. Edenall, ma'am," cried Lettice, whose tongue was generally in advance of her discretion. "She's been and gone and tumbled down the Norlands landslip, and smashed herself all to nothing."

"Hould yer whisht, ye clattering magpie," said Mrs. Marris, rising and curtsying until the top tuck of her lilac gown touched the floor; "it's here, ma'am, she's turned out to be a impostor; she's not Mrs. Edenall at all, but a woman as hasn't been no better than she ought. Mrs. Cromarty found it out, ma'am; she used to live maid with her when she was a young leddy, but you see with it being so many years back, she never know'd her for the same while she see'd her a-bending over that gentleman, that Mr. Ramsay that got killed. I mind of Mrs. Cromarty telling me summut a good bit past, but I didn't

give much heed. And there was a baby come, ma'am, if you'll excuse me mentioning such a circumstance, and you a virtuous maiden lady as you've always been. And her name was Marian Brandon, ma'am, Colin heered Mrs. Cromarty say so; but she's dead and gone, poor body, now, and I won't rake up her sins agin her."

Marian Brandon! Miss Luckie remembered that letter of Mistress Amiel Grey's which Alice had just shown to her. She tottered, pale and trembling, to the nearest seat.

"Mercy on us, she's going to faint; born leddies isn't used to hear tell o' such things!" and Lettice rushed to the fireplace and tore out a great bunch of mint, which she held under her mistress's nose.

As Miss Luckie revived, the truth broke slowly in upon her. Mrs. Edenall was Alice's mother. And then she remembered that other name which, in the midst of so much excitement and confusion, she had not yet linked with him who was now lying in Norlands Churchyard. Was Douglas Ramsay the father of Alice?

"Lettice, give me your hand to my room, I am very much startled."



The kind-hearted girl sprang forward, and supported Miss Luckie out of the kitchen. When they were gone, Mrs. Marris tied on her bonnet.

"It isn't late, I'll slip down and tell my niece as lives maid at Chapter Court. Law, what a tasty bit of news it is, and won't the Archdeacon's widdy open her eyes when she hears tell on it? She was allers dead set agin Mrs. Edenall, 'cause she held up her head so high. It's a queer world, it is."

## CHAPTER XV.



THE day after Mrs. Edenall's death, Janet wrote to her solicitor in Cumberland, informing him of the accident, and inquiring where the clothes, jewels, and other articles of value belonging to the unfortunate woman, should be forwarded. She received the following reply :—

“MADAM,—We are in receipt of the letter in which you announce the particulars of Mrs. Edenall's untimely death. Perhaps you are not aware that both Mrs. Edenall's parents are dead, and that, some years ago, her conduct was such as to alienate her completely from the other mem-

bers of her family, with whom, since that time, she has held no communication. We are authorized to say that any articles left by Mrs. Edenall at Westwood are at your own disposal; and if you have incurred any expenses on her account, they will be defrayed on application to us. We are, madam, your obedient servants,

“Messrs. SCRUTEM and Co.”

Mrs. Edenall was buried by the side of Douglas Ramsay. There chanced to be a vacant space, and it seemed fitting to the parish authorities that, as a similar accident had caused the death of both, they should rest together. Janet and Mrs. Cromarty attended the funeral, which was very simple.

As soon as it was over, Miss Bruce returned to Westwood. After the weary struggle and restlessness of the past month, the stillness of the old home seemed very restful. Tibbie had been there for two or three days, getting all in order, airing the rooms, arranging furniture, putting up curtains. There was no love of change in the old woman's disposition, and so she put everything back into its former place, even to Mrs. Edenall's crystal

letter-weight, which used to stand on the chimney-piece, and David's pens and rolls of manuscript music, which had lain on the little table in the corner ever since he went away.

"It looks still, still and peacefu' like," said Tibbie to herself, as she stood in the doorway of the parlour when all was arranged, "and the puir leddy 'll no ruffle it mair the noo. She aye put a glamour over it wi' her uncanny ways. The Lord send that she sall ha' quiet rest aboon, for it was far fra her i' this warld."

Janet arrived in the evening. Her first occupation, when she returned, was to gather up with reverent care all Mrs. Edenall's belongings and lay them away in the room which she had occupied. The letters and papers were left untouched, also that desk where the purse lay. Janet was the soul of honour, and she kept the secrets of the dead as faithfully as those of the living. Then she sat down and wrote to her brother.

She was no great correspondent. A letter once a month or so was the most that passed between them; neither, when exchanged, did they abound in sentiments or violent manifestations of affection. Just a quiet, unimpassioned record of

the everyday life of each; her little cares, little duties, little pleasures,—his toils, triumphs, successes won and difficulties overpast—these formed the chief materials of their correspondence. The inner life of each never came to the surface; no word was spoken now of the hopes which had once brightened the future, or the memories which lay like a cloud on the past.

Janet had not written to her brother since the day before Douglas Ramsay's death. She told him all of that now, of the first lonely watch, and the death scene with its strange revelations. She passed silently over her own griefs, and then went on to that second death, Mrs. Edenall's. All the particulars of both were given with clear, business-like accuracy, no comments, no moralising, nothing but the straightforward simple facts. From the dead she passed to the living. David had wished that she should not shrink from mentioning Alice's affairs to him, and especially the wedding, whenever that should take place. So she told him of the preparations which were being made, said that the Highlands had been chosen for their marriage jaunt, and closed her letter by stating that Captain Clay, Alice's only surviving

relative, had come from India, and was now at the Old Lodge, superintending the drawing-up of settlements for the bride.

As soon as this letter was finished, she sent it by Tibbie to the post, and then gave herself over to a long, long spell of meditation.

It was very rarely that Janet Bruce suffered herself to picture what life might have been. This lack of imagination was of incalculable benefit to her. It enabled her to take each day patiently, and make the best she could of it. The quiet, unvarying track of common work-day duty was not dimmed for her, as it would have been for others of more ardent natures, by the haunting memory of sunshine overpast, or the still more wearying hope deferred of joy that might come. Life for her now, was just a straight, even, well-defined track, with a beaten footpath opening out from day to day; but no shady by-paths, no flowery dingles, no sunlighted landscapes luring her away to wander over their brightness. She had conquered the past, and for her there was no future except that of heaven.

We talk of the heroism of those who battle hard in the thick of life against the mailed ranks of

worldly passions and cares ; who toil to the death with head, heart and hand, for standing-room and victory. But it is more heroic to strive silently with a grim array of memories which marshal ghostlike on the soul's battle-field ; and slaying them one by one, trample over their dead corpses to the life that lies beyond, the life of patient unwearying duty. This is what many an unknown Joan of Arc has to do, this is what Janet Bruce did, though no one ever praised her for it.

She was still sitting there, thinking over all these things, when some one came along the gravel walk. Janet lifted her head ; it was Mrs. Cromarty. Something unusual had excited her. She crushed the stones beneath her feet with an impetuous tread, very unlike her usual calm, stately bearing. Her swarthy brow was pale ; the rich curves of her lips were compressed into a thin, quivering red line, and fires of mingled womanly indignation and pity burned through her dark eyes. Janet beckoned her to come in, and she stood in the doorway of the quiet little room, startling its repose just as Mrs. Edenall used to do in the old time. Hurriedly and eagerly, without

waiting for greeting or salutation, she began to speak,

"And if she was base-born, ma'am, her heart is as white as an angel's wing, and it's ill credit to the man as dares cast in her face the sins of them that made her what she is. But it's none *that* that's broke his troth, it's because she's lost her bit of money; she hasn't a penny, the innocent darling, to call her own, and if he was a true man he'd grip her closer to his heart, he would, because she'd nought to give him but herself, instead of casting her off this way. Oh, ma'am, it's a wicked world, it is."

"I don't understand," said Janet quietly. As we have seen before, she was not expert at taking up unfinished trains of thought and linking them into actual facts.

"Ah, you haven't heard of it? It's sorry then that I am, ma'am, to be the first to tell ye such a dreary story. It's bonnie Miss Alice, bless her. The sorrow lies heavy upon her, the darlin', and all for no ill doing of hers. She's no claim to nothing in the Old Lodge, ma'am; and yon Captain Clay, him as we thought had come to give her away to Mr. Scrymgeour, owns every penny of the money that should have been hers."



"It is very sad, and Alice is not one to contend with privation. But, Mrs. Cromarty, she will soon have a home of her own and be safely sheltered."

"Sorry a bit of it, ma'am! He's cast her off, the false, mean-hearted money-hunter; excuse me, Miss Bruce, I oughtn't to speak such words, and me professing to be a Christian woman, but it's clean washed all the charity out of me, it has."

"Do you mean that Mr. Scrymgeour is not going to marry Alice?"

"Ay, ma'am, the pitiful thing that he is!"

One wild thought of her brother darted through Janet Bruce's mind, but she put it away again.

"I don't see clearly what you mean, Mrs. Cromarty. Mistress Amiel Grey had no nearer relative than Alice, at least so I always understood."

"Miss Bruce," and Mrs. Cromarty came nearer and spoke in a calm, rigid tone, "it's not a thing one cares to talk about, and I'd never have let it pass my lips, but there's others that'll tell you if I don't. Poor Miss Alice, bless her, is no niece of Mistress Amiel Grey's. She come to her

when she was a helpless baby, and we all thought she belonged to Mrs. Grey's kith and kin, but it isn't so. She's the child of Marian Brandon, Miss Bruce—her as we called Mrs. Edenall—and yon Douglas Ramsay that lies dead in the church-yard now. Theirs was the guilt, ma'am, and she has the sorrow to bear."

Janet showed no outward sign of feeling, but it seemed as if suddenly an icy hand had clutched her in its grasp and frozen the very life out of her. This Alice Grey—this young girl whom she had caressed and fondled—was the child of her own betrothed—the seal of his faithlessness to her. God forgive her that for one moment a thought of passionate anger burst forth against the unconscious girl! But only for a moment. Ere it had time to shape itself into a feeling, it was borne away by the God-given charity which endureth all things and thinketh no evil.

For some time she sat quite still. Janet was slow to take up new thoughts; she was not slow to take up new duties. It was her habit to be quiet, but whilst those who called her cold or apathetic were wasting time in unavailing regrets, she devised means for relief.

"Mrs. Cromarty," she said, after a pause, "I must go to Alice. If you are returning to St. Olave's, be so kind as to send me a cab down from the nearest stand."

"That I'll do, ma'am, and welcome. I'm thinking there's none will comfort the poor young thing like you can. Miss Luckie, bless her, is as kind as kind; but, ma'am, she's never known the real touch of sorrow at her heart—not stinging sorrow as reaches right down to the bottom—and I reckon it's none but that sort makes us able to speak a word in season to them that's weary."

It was late in the evening when Miss Bruce arrived at the Old Lodge. Captain Clay was there, examining the oil paintings in the oriel room, and directing the workmen to pack those which he wished to retain. The whole house was in confusion. Two men were taking an inventory of the furniture; Symons, a look of steady resentment on her face, was emptying the contents of the china closet and arranging them in order on the table; another servant was collecting the plate for a goldsmith who had come to weigh it. Lettice, with her arms full of linen and table-cloths, met Janet in the hall.

"Can I speak to Miss Grey?"

Lettice dropped the napery and burst into a passionate fit of crying.

"Folks says she's none Miss Grey, now, but they can't rob her of her blessed christened name, as we all love her by, the darling! I knewed that man meant mischief by his looks as soon as ever he set foot in the house, but I never thought to see ought like this. We're all going to be thrown out of place, ma'am, and what's to become on us, goodness knows!"

And Lettice threw her apron over her head with a fresh burst of tears.

Miss Bruce watched her very quietly.

"Will you show me where Miss Alice is?" she said again, "I wish to see her."

Lettice pushed the piles of linen on one side, and conducted Janet to Alice's room. It was in the oldest part of the house, over the oriel room, with a heavy stone-mullioned window looking out into the Close. It had an unkept, comfortless appearance now; some of the furniture had been removed, the ornaments taken away, the oak chests, where Aunt Amiel used to keep her linen, emptied, and some of the contents scattered on the floor.

Alice did not hear Miss Bruce come in. She was sitting on the broad low window-seat, her hands clasped loosely together, her forehead pressed against the stone framework. The sunny brown ringlets that hung over her face were wet with tears, but she was not crying now. Her grief seemed to have spent itself, and she only moaned heavily as if in pain.

This was Douglas Ramsay's child. Janet crushed back all other thoughts but those of pity. She went softly up to the poor girl, and laid her hands upon the head that was bowed down so helplessly.

"Alice, I have come to take you home to me."

Think, you tender-hearted, suffering woman, who may have staked your happiness on the faith of one man and found him worthless—think of the bitterness that would curdle your very blood at sight of his base-born child, *his* child, but not yours, the seal that fixed your separation, and not the tie that bound you more closely together—and then say with whom you would mate this quiet, cold, undemonstrative Janet Bruce, as she leaned over the desolate girl and whispered—

"Alice, come home to me."

Alice only moaned and pressed her pale face more closely against the stone mullions. She was utterly broken down and crushed. She had none of the pride which carries some women through an ordeal as severe as this, and nerves them to bear it without a tear, lest pity should be offered, that pity which is far worse than silence. Miss Bruce said no more to her. She fetched Lettice up and told her to put together such things as her young mistress would need for the present; then she went to Miss Luckie to tell her of the arrangement which she had made, and then back again to the poor girl who was still sitting there in a mute, unconscious stupor of grief.

Janet's manner was calm and decided as she laid her hand on Alice's shoulder. This time Alice lifted up her face; its look, so charged with helpless, uncomplaining woe, almost overcame Janet. She put her arm round her, and led her downstairs to the cab which was waiting at the door. Without a word Alice suffered herself to be lifted in. Lettice put the portmanteau under the seat. With a jerky bow and a quick "where to next, ma'am?" the driver shut up the steps, and so Alice Grey left the Old Lodge, the home of her

childhood, the home she thought to leave ere long amidst the pomp and flutter of bridal happiness.

Night was falling when they reached Westwood.

The sky was grey, and a drizzly rain fell softly upon the fluttering leaves. Tibbie had lighted a fire in the parlour; tea was waiting for them on the little white-covered table; all looked peaceful and homelike, scarce changed from that summer evening twelvemonths ago when Alice first came as a guest to that house. The poor child seemed still to be in a sort of dream. Janet took off her hat and cloak, and then made her sit down on the sofa. As she drew the pale little face closer to her own bosom, she noticed with a sharp grip of pain how like it was to Douglas Ramsay's. For his sake she kissed the forehead, then the colourless cheeks, then the still lips folded down in mute, patient grief. This tenderness seemed to rouse Alice. She lifted herself up:—

“Oh, Miss Bruce, I could have borne it all if only Cuthbert had kept on loving me.”

And then with a gush of tears in which it seemed as if she would have wept her very life away, she fell into Janet's arms, the only resting place that was left for her now.

## CHAPTER XVI.



UTHBERT, if I were asked to give my opinion, I should say that the sacrifice of affection which you have been called upon to make, and from which, to the everlasting honour of your family and position you have not selfishly shrunk, reflects the utmost credit upon you; and by thus nobly allowing private feeling to become a martyr to the superior claims of social status, you have immeasurably exalted yourself in my estimation."

This somewhat lengthy and well-digested synopsis of archidiaconal sentiment was given, it is needless to inform the reader, in the dining room of Chapter Court, and proceeded from the lips of



Mrs. Scrymgeour, who sat in customary afternoon state at the right-hand side of the velvet pile hearthrug.

She held in her hand a piece of rich white satin, on which she was embroidering the Scrymgeour arms in gold and silver thread, for a banner screen. This piece of work was originally intended as a wedding present to Alice Grey, and Mrs. Scrymgeour had thought of having the Old Lodge arms quartered on the opposite side in royal blue. She congratulated herself however, now, that she had not gone to the expense of having them drawn for that purpose. In its present condition the screen was complete, and might answer for a future bride-elect without further alteration.

The Chapter Court cat couched in the centre of the hearthrug. Its forepaws were held together, its eyes closed, its head slightly uplifted. One might have thought it was returning thanks on account of the great deliverance which had been wrought out for the dignity of the family.

Cuthbert, in a luxuriously-cushioned arm-chair, sipped his coffee with the air of a gentleman. Certainly he did not give the impression of a person suffering under wounded susceptibilities as

he lounged gracefully back, his dainty kid boots elevated on a crimson hassock, his right hand lying like a lily leaf upon the black locks of a little Skye-terrier that crouched beside him, his left toying with a silver spoon crested with the Scrymgeour arms. On the whole, he looked rather comfortable than otherwise. But we will take it for granted that he possessed in an eminent degree the invaluable art of self-control. Perhaps in secret he might shed a tear or two over his blighted hopes, and men's faces don't show sorrow as women's do.

Neither was there much of the martyr spirit impressed on that aristocratic face, with its framework of silky brown locks, and pendent tassels of whisker. Mr. Scrymgeour was not likely at present to become a martyr either to his principles or his affections. You might have looked in vain, too, for any abatement of the complacency which ruled supreme over those chiselled features, or any, even the slightest twinge of sorrow, if not for the suffering he had caused, at least for the downfall his honour had sustained. Evidently the thought never suggested itself to Cuthbert

Scrymgeour that in withdrawing from his engagement he had done violence to the minutest fraction of moral or social etiquette. It was, as he explained to his friends, "an unfortunate circumstance, but unavoidable, perfectly unavoidable." And they quite agreed with him. Had the affair touched Alice's pedigree only, and left her purse intact, possibly Cuthbert might have screwed himself up to the heroic, and fortified his resolution with that oft-quoted couplet :—

"Kind hearts are more than coronets,  
And simple faith than Norman blood."

But when money and position pass off together in invisible vapour from the social crucible, it is astonishing how little people think of the useless residuum of goodness which remains.

"So fortunate, my dear Cuthbert," continued the Archdeacon's widow, in the blindest of tones, "so fortunate that the *éclaircissement* took place just when it did. Had not the death of that perfidious woman delayed the consummation of your marriage with the girl she palmed upon society as her niece, I tremble to think what the consequences must have been. Cuthbert, I could

never have lifted up my head in St. Olave's, had I beheld the nephew, in whom are centred my fondest earthly hopes, inveigled into an indissoluble connection with—but I will not soil my lips by repeating the word which designates Alice Brandon."

"It's a confounded nuisance, Aunt. I expect the thing's bandied about all over the city."

"To your credit, Cuthbert. It cannot be mentioned but with infinite credit to yourself. I am convinced the Close families will join in supporting your motives. Indeed, the Canon's lady has already confided to me her profound sympathy with you as regards the deception of which you had so nearly become the dupe."

"I wonder how the little girl feels," said Cuthbert, lifting up a spoonful of coffee, and letting it fall in sparkling amber drops back again to his cup, greatly to the delight of Skye, who sat on his hind legs watching the process.

"Cuthbert, I have dismissed the unfortunate creature from my affections, and I trust your fortitude will prompt you to act with equal decision. I am happy, however, to say, that my indignation did not lead me to forget the claims

of ceremony. I sent my maid across with cards as soon as the affair was concluded."

That was quite true. On the heels of the messenger, who delivered up poor Alice's little love tokens, came a second, bearing cards and Mrs. Archdeacon Scrymgeour's sincere sympathies. Miss Luckie was crossing the hall, and received both sets of articles at the same time; the sympathies she consigned to nameless limbo, the cards she tore in pieces, and, in the violence of her indignation, flung them among the pig's wash.

"I say, Aunt, to think now of Alice being the daughter of that imperial Mrs. Edenall!"

Mrs. Scrymgeour elevated the banner screen so as to hide her face, which glowed with insulted modesty.

"Cuthbert!" she exclaimed, "if you have any respect for your aunt, do not presume to mention that woman's name in my presence. I expunge the very thought of her from my memory; the unprincipled outcast, to think of intruding herself into the bosom of a respectable family; nay more, to fix her residence in the precincts of a Cathedral city; nay more, to insinuate herself morning by

morning into the ecclesiastical edifice itself, and flaunt her shame in the very next pew to the prebendary stall—Cuthbert, it is an everlasting disgrace to the Close; it reflects a stain upon us which can never be effaced. It outrages all the principles of——”

Gently, gently, Mrs. Archdeacon Scrymgeour! Now and then as you trail your sumptuous silks across the pavement of the High Street, a fair young girl, once pure as well as fair, bedizened now in the tawdry finery of the castaway, and wearing on her brow the brand which no tears can wash away, crosses your path. She once waited upon you, Mrs. Scrymgeour. She once smoothed those grizzled curls of yours, and folded the archidiaconal velvet over your heart-empty bosom, and heard you read out of that crimson-covered prayer-book words of tender, loving kindness, the words of Him who spake as never man spake, who hallowed all human love by the touch of Divine sympathy, who said not of the hardened, but the repentant sinner—“Neither do I condemn thee.” She heard you read those words, Mrs. Scrymgeour. But in an unfortunate moment you discovered her gossiping with a follower, ay,

brazen-faced hussy that she was, actually permitting the scoundrel to kiss her cheek behind the shadow of your ecclesiastical back kitchen door; and out of your employ then and there she went. You knew she had no home, but that mattered not; sheltered or unsheltered she should not make the grey walls of Chapter Court a screen for forbidden love passages, so she left at a moment's notice,—where, was of no consequence. And now, does it enter that heart of yours to think that one day her innocence may be required at your hands, before a tribunal from which there is no appeal?

Apparently it did not, for Mrs. Archdeacon Scrymgeour continued in the same sedate, dignified tones :—

“ I consider it a duty which every pure-minded woman owes to her sex, to discountenance to the utmost such unprincipled creatures, and to abandon them to the punishment with their evil deeds deserve. I have no sympathy which those mistaken individuals who would relax the barriers of judicious moral restraint, and extend the right hand of sympathy to women who have set at defiance the institutes of virtue.”

The cat drew herself up, folded her tail deco-

rously round her fore-paws, and turned towards her mistress with a complacent pucker of her face which seemed to say: "Mrs. Scrymgeour, I endorse your sentiments, and am proud of them."

"She must have had money, though," continued Cuthbert. "Did I not hear you say that diamond bracelet of hers was the envy of the Close, and her lace shawls or mantles, or whatever you call them, were the real things, best Spanish?"

"Cuthbert, since you force me to the subject, I repeat my conviction that the articles to which you refer were the wages of guilt, nor can I acquit the Bruces of lamentable and even culpable neglect, in not having instituted a more strict inquiry into her character before they received her into the bosom of their family."

"But," persisted the pertinacious nephew, "you once thought of leaving cards, did you not, and you only did not do it for fear of patronizing the Bruces?"

Mrs. Scrymgeour summoned all her dignity. "Cuthbert, we will, if you please, drop the subject."

The subject was dropped accordingly, and a profound silence ensued. It must have lasted some



minutes, when Blanche Egerton sailed slowly past the window on her way to the Deanery, where Elene Somers was having a few musical friends to practise part-songs. She wore a heavy black lace dress, a floating burnous of crimson grenadine fell in graceful folds round her tall figure, and from her little black velvet hat a single white feather drooped and mingled with the blue-black braids of her hair.

Mrs. Scrymgeour laid down her work and deliberately took in the general effect of this magnificent brunette toilette. Then she resumed her operations on the banner-screen, and by-and-by remarked, as if bringing to a close some well wrought out train of thought—

“I should say old Squire Egerton will leave those grand-daughters of his, twenty-five thousands each at the very least.” Another pause.—“Very good family too, unblemished pedigree, not a bar-sinister that I am aware of, on their escutcheon.”

The cat intimated her approval of these statements by a wave of her left paw. There was no reply from Cuthbert, who was still idly toying with Skye's jetty locks.

The clock in the hall struck eight. Mr. Scrym-

geour set down his coffee-cup and strolled to the window. A furniture dray stood at the door of the Old Lodge ; it was half filled with packages, and a couple of men were arranging others upon it which looked like picture-cases.

"Yes, Aunt,"—it was a full half-hour since Blanche Egerton had vanished through the grey portals of the Deanery—"And I always liked a dark girl."

So, courteous reader, between you and me, I fancy we may consider that little matter as finally arranged. And let us hope that Squire Egerton will not take it into his head to marry again, as is so frequently the fashion amongst old men now-a-days.

## CHAPTER XVII.



HERE was a general sale at the Old Lodge a fortnight after Captain Clay's arrival. He did not intend to use the place as a residence. Accustomed as he had been for so many years to the bustle and excitement of foreign military life, the brooding dulness of a second-rate Cathedral city appeared intolerable; and, therefore, after making all needful arrangements, he left for his estate in the South.

Of all things in this world—at least that part of it which lives in handsome houses and gives liberal entertainments—there is scarcely anything more sad than the private view days which precede a general auction sale. To watch brokers and bar-

gain-hunters scanning with shrewd, greedy-eyed intelligence, the little home treasures which have been made sacred by their association with the departed ; to see so-called friends prying curiously, and with the easy air of privileged intruders, into the rooms where once they had been courteously entreated as guests, or speculating on the possible price of services of plate from which scarce a month ago they had partaken the hospitality of its dead or bankrupt owner—there is something rather melancholy in all this. Surely, if a departed spirit wished to see one of the most painful phases of human life, he could not do better than revisit his old abode during the private view days of the auction sale which finishes up his funeral obsequies.

Everything at the Old Lodge was sold, except some oil paintings and a few pieces of the rarer furniture. The attendance was large. Some came to see the mansion with its splendid entrance hall, and wainscotted galleries, and tapestried state rooms which had once been the resting-places of kings. Antiquarians revelled amongst the carved oak cabinets and chests, each of which was worth a cart-load of modern drawing-room furniture. A few

stiff old maidens, who had a weakness for china, slipped across the Close to inspect Mistress Amiel Grey's goodly store of Dresden and Sèvres. Others, not a few, came simply for the sake of lounging over the rooms where once they had been welcomed as guests, and gossiping over the unfortunate affair which had made such a sudden splash in the stagnant waters of Close society.

The view commenced in the afternoon, but before that time a few of the families, who objected to being mixed up with the vulgar herd of ordinary sale goers, made friends with the auctioneer, and got admittance to an extra private view, early in the morning, before the touch of fingers smirched with trade or shopkeeping had marred Mistress Amiel Grey's household treasures.

"Exquisite napery this, Mrs. Spurge," and Canon Crumpet's wife laid her white hand on a pile of silken fine damask which was arranged on one of the corner tables in the oriel room. "And so new too; really it cannot have been washed more than once or twice."

"Part of the wedding outfit, dear Mrs. Crumpet," whispered the Colonel's lady; "you know the day was fixed and everything prepared, and the

poor girl, expecting she had unlimited means at command, spared no expense. An unfortunate thing, wasn't it?"

"Very unfortunate," Mrs. Crumpet replied, unfolding one of the dinner napkins, snowdrop pattern, with Mrs. Grey's crest woven in the centre. "Very unfortunate, especially for poor Mr. Scrymgeour. I really pity him from the bottom of my heart; you know it must have been such a blow to him, such a very great blow!"

"It was an unpleasant affair, certainly."

"Yes, and he could not have acted otherwise than he did. You know it would have been completely out of the question for him to have thrown himself away upon a girl who had not even common respectability to sustain herself with. Would it not, dear Mrs. Spurge?"

Mrs. Spurge thought that it would have been, as the Canon's wife said, completely out of the question. It behoved a clergyman to consider his position. Position in a Cathedral city was of the utmost importance; everything must give way to it.

There was a rustle of draperies behind them, the draperies of Mrs. Egerton and brown-eyed Blanche.

"Ah, Mrs. Egerton, good morning! good morning, Blanche. Beautiful show of things, is there not? Mrs. Spurge and I were just talking over this table linen, exquisitely fine, isn't it? But do you know, Mrs. Egerton, I don't fancy any of the Close people will purchase, on account of the crest."

"Can't it be picked out?" said Blanche, "I suppose it is only marked in with silk."

"No, Blanche dear, it is part of the design. I remember once when I was dining here, Mrs. Grey told me she had it manufactured at a place in Ireland, expressly for the Old Lodge table. Poor dear old lady, you know she was always so very particular about her table arrangements. If she could only step in now and see the wreck!"

Ah, if she only could!

"Well, do you know, Mrs. Egerton," said the Canon's lady, "it strikes me as the most flagrant piece of deception I ever knew; so unprincipled, really so very unprincipled. I cannot understand how Mrs. Grey could lend herself to anything so unprincipled. And when everyone in the Close gave her credit for such

But the world is very hollow, is it not, dear Mrs. Egerton?"

Mrs. Egerton said that the world was hollow, very hollow indeed, painfully so in fact; and then the four ladies moved away to examine the plate and china which were set out at the other end of the room.

Mrs. Crumpet took up the pieces of the massive green and gold dessert service, and tapped them separately with her gloved knuckles.

"Quite sound, not a flaw in them. Do you know, I've set my mind on this service. As soon as ever I heard of the unfortunate turn affairs had taken, I said to my eldest girl—Sophia, dear, there's sure to be a sale now at the Old Lodge, and I shall step across and secure that service. It was a present from Dean Grey to his wife when they were married. Beautiful workmanship, you see. Alice used to be very proud of it, on account of some peculiarity in the tint. Do you know what has become of the girl, Mrs. Spurge?"

"I really don't, dear Mrs. Crumpet. The entire was so exceedingly disreputable that I feel in my position not to inquire too minutely



"I heard something about it," said Blanche, lifting her dreamy eyes from a little silver bouquet holder of Alice's which was lying with the rest of the plate. Miss Bruce is giving her a home at Westwood until she can turn herself to some means of subsistence. Mrs. Scrymgeour told me so." And as she mentioned that name, a faint blush stole over Miss Egerton's ivory cheek.

"Exceedingly kind of Miss Bruce. Possibly she knows more of the affair than we do, but the Westwood people are the very last whom I should have suspected of harbouring Alice Brandon."

"Alice who? dear Mrs. Crumpet," and the Colonel's lady lifted her aristocratic head with an air of polite inquiry—"Alice who?"

"Brandon, Alice Brandon. Is it possible, Mrs. Spurge, that you have not heard?"

"Well, you know I am in the habit of having my young people always with me, and of course in their presence I make a point of abstaining from anything that might bring the slightest possible stain on their youthful minds. But do enlighten me."

Mrs. Crumpet stood severely erect at the head of the table, stately and dignified as any of the

stone worthies who kept watch over the west front of the Minster. Her left hand rested on the handle of Mrs. Grey's silver urn, the urn from which, in days gone by, she had often quaffed the cup which cheers but not inebriates; her right pressed with all friendliness the gloved fingers of the Colonel's lady.

"You recollect the—the person—the woman I mean, who under the name of Mrs. Edenall, palmed herself, about a year ago, upon Miss Bruce. She was killed, you know, the other day."

"Oh, yes. She sat near the Prebend's stall in the Cathedral, and wore such exquisite moire antiques. A distinguished-looking woman rather, and very tall."

"Yes, some of these unfortunate creatures are quite superior in their bearing. Well, she has turned out to be—you understand," and Mrs. Crumpet supplied the residue of her information with an emphatic gesture of scornful contempt.

"It was accidentally found out," she continued, "Mrs. Cromarty, the housekeeper at Norlands, discovered her bending over that gentleman who was thrown from his horse at the landslip, and

conducting herself in a very strange manner towards him. And then it turned out that he was the man with whom, nearly twenty years before, she had absconded."

"Dear Mrs. Crumpet, how disreputable! And to think that her presence was actually suffered at the Cathedral prayers. But how providential that no one left cards. Well, and about Alice?"

"The girl whom we always took to be Mrs. Grey's niece, and whom we have treated with such uniform respect and consideration, is the child of this clandestine union; illegitimate of course, and therefore unfit to be received any more into respectable society. I wonder Miss Bruce sees it consistent to have her at Westwood, but Scotch people are rather peculiar; and of course now that Mr. Bruce is abroad there is no danger of that kind in the way. Dear me! I am surprised you have never heard of the affair. I daresay, however, Mrs. Archdeacon Scrymgeour would like it hushed up as much as possible; you know it was a very disagreeable thing for a man of Mr. Scrymgeour's position to have his name mixed up with such exceptionable people."

"Exactly, and to have been made the dupe of

Mrs. Grey's wiles—a person who was always thought to be the very soul of honour. But as you say, Mrs. Crumpet, the world is hollow, painfully hollow. Would you object to step across with me into the drawing-room? I fancy those tabouret curtains would just suit my bay window, and I have some thought of securing the little ormolu time-piece for the bracket in Blanche's boudoir, the dear child has such a fancy for anything tasteful."

After all, it is a merciful providence which prevents departed souls from revisiting their earthly resting-places, for in most cases the retrospect would be anything but pleasant.

## CHAPTER XVIII.



HE Old Lodge servants were paid off and the house advertised to be let. Greatly to the wrath and indignation of the Close families, who had set their hearts upon a baronet, or at the very least the younger son of a titled family, it was taken by a purse-proud millionaire from Millsmany, a flaunting fungus spawned in the dark recesses of dye-houses and machinery; more obnoxious, as Mrs. Scrymgeour observed, than even Mrs. Edenall herself; for that person, however faulty her antecedents might have been, always preserved the external appearance of a lady, and never

roamed the Close, as the new-comers did, in toilets that might have been turned out of Bedlam.

Mr. Bullens was a jolly, carousing, country-squire-like sort of man, with a red-faced wife, who dropped her h's, and walked out before dinner in a pink silk dress with three flounces. There were two daughters, good-tempered girls, but terribly coarse, according to the St. Olave's canon of good taste. They used to carry brown-paper parcels in the streets, and laughed so that you might hear them from one end of the Close to the other. Three grown-up sons completed the family. They had warehouses in Millsmany, but came over to St. Olave's for the Sunday. The Close mammas took stock of them during their first public appearance at church, and then consigned them to oblivion, as being quite ineligible in a matrimonial point of view.

By-and-by the Old Lodge began to manifest unmistakable symptoms of its change of ownership. Mr. Bullens would fain have had the old brick-work re-dressed and painted a uniform bright red, but the landlord had reserved the right of external alterations, and so the Mills-

many taste had to be confined to the garden, and interior decorations.

The pleached alleys, and trim, fancifully-cut box trees at the back of the house, were hewn down, and their places supplied by an Italian garden,—a dazzling patchwork of many-coloured flower-beds, with a huge wire basket full of geraniums in the middle, and plaster-of-Paris statues disposed at judicious intervals. Brilliant amber curtains, with gilded cornices of the latest design, draped the heavy mullioned windows of the drawing-room; the oaken furniture, that matched so well with the polished wainscotting and cathedral outlook of the room, was replaced by rosewood and amber damask; and Mrs. Grey's Dresden china and antique ornaments gave way before a motley array of fancy scent-bottles, papier-maché cases, wax flowers, and little bits of knick-knackery, which made the place look altogether like a Roman matron—the mother of the Gracchi, for instance, decked out in crinoline and a ball dress.

The Position Committee, with Mrs. Scrymgeour at its head, “sat” upon the Bullenses soon after their arrival, and unanimously placed them in

one of the back apartments of the social edifice, quite beyond the pale of cards or civilities of any description. Mrs. and the Misses Bullens, in blissful ignorance of the locality assigned them, prepared to receive the homage which they doubted not would be tendered to their long purses. Accordingly, after making a magnificent appearance at church, they arrayed themselves in flounced silks, and sat in state morning after morning, waiting patiently for the cards that were never sent, and the callers that never came.

They did not trouble themselves much, however, about the mistake into which they had fallen; finding that St. Olave's was not productive in the social department, they consoled themselves by a liberal allowance of champagne dinners, gay dresses, and as much gaiety, in the way of balls and assemblies, as could be got without a voucher. Meanwhile, the goodly fellowship of the Close families looked on with a grim smile; outwardly scorning the pretentious display of the new-comers, but inwardly chafing, though they would not allow it to themselves, at the cast-iron barriers of conventionality, which



prevented the golden current of the Mills many wealth from uniting itself with their unblemished centuries of Norman blood.

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Captain Clay, though a worldly man, was not hard-hearted. Finding that Miss Brandon, as she was now called, was left entirely dependent, he gave for her use the cottage at Norlands, together with the little garden immediately surrounding it. The moors and pasture lands, which belonged to the estate, were let separately. He also allowed her a stipend of fifty pounds a year, to be paid to her out of the rental of the St. Olave's property, which had formerly belonged to Mistress Amiel Grey. This was to be continued until such time as she married, or was able in some way to earn her own living. Miss Luckie's friends exerted themselves in her behalf with such diligence that, within a month from the breaking up of the establishment at the Old Lodge, she was once more safely installed into her post at the Low Gardens, with the privileges and immunities pertaining thereto. Alice staid with Miss Bruce until Mrs. Cromarty, who steadily refused to quit the service of her young

mistress, had got the Norlands Cottage into order; and then she went there, to live, with such patience and fortitude as she could, the new, strangely straitened life which had been portioned out to her.

Alice was too self-unconscious to be proud. That very guileless, unthinking simplicity of nature which would prevent her from reaching to any very lofty height of womanly greatness, kept her also from the painful smart of wounded dignity; which to many suffering under a grief like hers would have been intolerable.

And even the love so heartlessly thrown back upon her, had not wrought its way far down into the depths of her nature. It had never as yet compassed her whole capacity of enjoying and suffering, or become a real influence in her life for good or evil. True, it was such a love as many, perhaps most, women marry and "live happily ever afterwards" upon; perhaps, also, it was such a love as might have served her, too, until compliments and caresses began to pall both upon the giver and receiver of them. But the loss of it did not blast her life. It did not, like some wounds which God sends, leave a scar

which neither heaven nor earth can ever wholly heal. She let it go from her as children watch the death of some pet creature which has fed from their hands, and amused them with its pretty ways. She wept and bewailed much, but the capacity of enjoying and loving remained still. A few weeks, perhaps a few months, and the wound might be quite healed ; and this not because she was either shallow or heartless, but simply because the young nature holds nothing with an unyielding grasp.

Alice had not lost her youthfulness of heart. It was well for her that the first great trial of her life came while as yet she had elasticity enough to meet and overmaster it. It belongs not to the first years of life to sorrow lastingly over anything that mars their sunshine. Perhaps, too, she bore her double loss better, the loss of fortune and the loss of affection, because she could not at once realize all its meaning. Self-denial, economy, retrenchment—these were words which had no meaning for Alice. She knew that a very different life to the one she had hitherto lived, waited for her now ; but she committed herself to the exigencies of her new position in the same

blind faith with which she had looked forward, a little while before, to the responsibilities of the feminine pastorate, trusting that ability would somehow come with necessity. And not until some months of the new life, with its unaccustomed trials and pinching privations had passed away, did her spirit falter or her little heart give way.

The day after that other letter had been posted, Janet sat down and wrote to her brother again; giving him, in her plain, simple, straight-forward way, a full account of the reverses which had befallen Alice, the breaking off of the marriage, the loss of fortune, position, name,—everything in fact but the little cottage at Norlands, and the scanty pittance which was scarce enough to keep her from absolute want. She told him of her bringing the poor, friendless girl home to Westwood for awhile; and then, which was a far harder thing to tell, of Alice's relationship to Mrs. Edenall and Douglas Ramsay.

This letter she sent to Leipsic, to the same address as the previous one. In the next letter which she received from David Bruce, he alluded to none of the facts she had mentioned. He ex-

pressed a little kind, brotherly sympathy with her in the troubles through which she had herself passed, and in a few brief words told her how closely through those weeks of anxiety she had been held in his memory and prayers. But there was no word of pity for Alice, nor of sorrow for the great grief which had come upon her. It seemed as if both in prosperity and adversity he would put her from his thoughts, and suffer the past to be as though it had never been. Janet wondered. But she had unbounded faith in her brother, and she took it for granted that his silence was the silence of wisdom. Perhaps the old dream had faded quite away now, and a new love, brighter, more prosperous, risen from the ashes of the past. Still, it would have been so easy to have sent one little word of pity, to have said that he remembered her, or was sorry for her.

Alice staid at Westwood three weeks. Janet's tender loving-kindness, so silent, but so true, did her much good. She learned not to forget her sorrow, but to receive it humbly, reverently, as something whereby she might reach to a purer life. Gradually the bitterness of it wore

away. The old look, not quite so bright, perhaps, but quiet and peaceful still, came back to her young face, and at times she was almost buoyant again. Alice might make a noble woman yet, nobler far than if this sorrow had never come. The force which it opposed to the playful current of her former life woke up courage and resolution. She must do and endure now, not simply enjoy; and when this lesson is once learned, the foundation of worthy character is laid.

Often in their long conversations they had spoken of the wayward, fitful, suffering woman whose strange fate had cast a shadow over the Westwood home, but as yet Janet had found no words to tell Alice how closely her own life was linked with that of Mrs. Edenall. Over and over again, in her innocent, unconscious talk, Alice had trodden on the very verge of the great secret, and as often had Janet shrunk from telling her all the truth.

When duty led the way, Janet never flinched. Had she known for certain that to tell Alice the facts of Mrs. Edenall's history was the best thing that could be done, she would have nerved herself for the task, and, at any expense of personal feel-

ing, told her all that she ought to know. But she questioned with herself whether the revelation would bring good or ill. The shock might be too great for Alice just now. She often used to talk, in a vague, uncertain sort of way, of finding her parents. She seemed to cling to the hope that somehow or somewhere they would meet; and to tell her of her utter loneliness might do more harm than good. The truth, however, came at last in its own time and way.

It was one quiet, sunshiny evening, towards the close of Alice's stay, and she and Janet sat together in the open bow-window of the Westwood parlour. They had been consulting about the future, what could be made of it. Janet was trying to contrive some plan by which Alice might eke out the small stipend which Captain Clay allowed, so as to make it cover needful household expenses. After the subject had been carefully discussed, Alice took out Aunt Amiel's letter from her desk. She had never read it since that fateful night when its contents wrought such terrible grief for her.

As she opened it, there fell out the little note which Mistress Grey had enclosed, but which Alice

as yet had never read, thinking that it had only come there by chance. It was very old and yellow, and had a musty smell, something like the chant and anthem books that had been mouldering for years in the organ pew at St. Olave's cathedral. This was all the note contained—

“To Mistress Amiel Grey. Madam,—I am authorized by the friends of the woman, Marian Brandon, who is now under restraint in consequence of mental derangement, to inform you that they fully comply with your requirements regarding the infant which you have undertaken to rear. For the future no claim will be made upon it by any of the Brandon family, and the disposal of it is left to your sole control.

“I am, madam, yours respectfully,

“AUGUSTUS BRANDON.”

There was an engraved crest upon this sheet of paper, surmounted by a motto. Alice examined it carefully. She knew a little about heraldry, for Mistress Amiel Grey, with the pride of old aristocratic descent, had often shown her the Grey and Grisby crests, together with others



belonging to the Close families, and explained to her the origin of the different devices. This one was an open hand, pierced with a dart. Above was the motto, "*Post tenebra lux.*"

"Miss Bruce," said Alice, after awhile, "I have seen this crest before, on a handkerchief of Mrs. Edenall's. There was a name, too, but I forget it now. What was Mrs. Edenall's maiden name, do you know?"

The truth could not be concealed any longer now. Janet took both Alice's hands in hers, and looking earnestly into her face, said—

"Alice, I am going to tell you something that may be very painful to you; can you bear it?"

"I think I can. You told me once that suffering was never too hard to be borne, so long as there was no sin in it, and I don't know that I have been doing anything wrong."

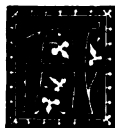
"This Mrs. Edenall, Alice, who lived with us so long, was your mother; her name was Marian Brandon. We never knew it until after she was dead. She did not know either that you were her child. They told her a long time ago that you were dead, and she believed it."

Alice seemed neither shocked nor startled. She bent down, hiding her face on Janet Bruce's knee. Janet thought she would have wept or trembled—she did neither. Over and over again she whispered to herself, "Mamma, Mrs. Edenall!" By-and-by she lifted herself up, and looking into Janet's eyes with a long, earnest, questioning gaze, she said—

"And my father, Janet?"

"Your father was Douglas Ramsay."

## CHAPTER XIX.



LICE BRANDON went back to Norlands towards the end of August, as the cornfields began to golden, and the sportsmen's guns to echo over the far-reaching purple moorlands. And not till then did she realize the change which had come over her life.

At Westwood, Janet Bruce's tenderness had sheltered her from much that was painful in her new position. She had not felt its loneliness. So long as she could nestle up to some faithful heart, and clasp a friendly hand in hers, Alice was not unhappy. Then, too, she had not known the pinching grip of poverty, nor been exposed to

the altered behaviour of people who had once courted and flattered her.

The Close families did not wish to ignore Alice, —oh! no, they were far too magnanimous for that. They would even take the trouble to come all the way across the road if they chanced to meet her; extending to her their dainty finger tips, and smiling with a sweet condescension, which seemed to say, "See how compassionate we are; you have no position now, not the slightest claim upon our notice, yet look, we do not scorn you; we are quite ready to shake hands with you and show you how forgiving we can be to the sin which has made you what you are." And then with a smile and a bow they would sail away.

Alice had not much pride in her heart, but she had enough to perceive this altered demeanour, and shrink from it. By-and-by she rarely ventured into St. Olave's, except in early morning time, before the fashionable folks had turned out for their daily airing; or, if she chanced to meet them, she would quietly slip aside into one of the dim little alleys that turned out of the main streets, and hide there until they had passed.

Soon she was completely forgotten amongst them. They ceased to speak or think of her. As a chance remark brought her name to the surface of their idle gossip, it would be mentioned with a "poor thing" sort of commiseration; but even this wore out at last, and ere the autumn leaves which were to have fallen upon her bridal home had drifted away, the memory of Alice Grey was forgotten.

And so the time wore on until September, the seventh of September, Alice's birthday, and David Bruce's birthday, too. She remembered that when she woke in the morning, and mingled his name with her own in her simple prayer.

The day dawned brightly as its companion day had dawned twelve months ago. The browning cornfields waved in the sunshine; the trees put on their golden September coronals. The wold hills and purple uplands gave Alice a greeting bright as ever; others might forget, but they smiled upon her friendly still. No dainty little pink-edged notes of congratulation came to the cottage that day, though; no gay ladies in cloud-tinted muslins alighted at the garden gate with compliments and greetings for Miss Grey; no sumptuous luncheon

was spread upon the lawn, and there were no longer any dancers to the music of the itinerant German band which came to Norlands in the afternoon, remembering how well they had fared there only a year ago.

Miss Luckie sent a wee little letter, half of sympathy, half congratulation. She was confined to her room with a sprained ankle, and could not offer her good wishes in person. That was all the postman brought. Not a note from Janet, nor even—poor Alice fondly hoped he might have remembered her birthday as she had thought of his—not even a line from David Bruce, to say that he grieved with her for the great sorrow which had darkened all her life. Was he too going to fail her—the strong, true, steady friend whose very name had always been a rest?

The morning passed wearily on. Alice had a great pile of household linen to mend, which Mrs. Cromarty brought in from the monthly wash. The dainty little fingers, so long used to only fairy-like fancy work, were growing skilful in coarser service now. But it was a weary task after all, for no pleasant thoughts wove themselves into the work; no rippling smile came and went

upon her face ; no dreams of coming joy made music on the silence of her life any more.

Alice sighed very wearily, and pressed her fingers over her aching eyeballs to keep back the starting tears. A cool hand was laid upon her forehead. Janet Bruce's lips touched her own.

"Alice, I have come to spend the day with you."

And the kind, close, tender hand-clasp told her all the rest. No need for spoken sympathy or half sad congratulations ; Miss Bruce seldom gave either. To feel her near, was quite enough for Alice.

In the afternoon they sauntered out into the garden, and took their work into a little arbour formed of honeysuckle and ivy, close upon the beech tree hedge, which divided the Norlands garden from the high road. It was not a day for talking much. There was a drowsy, slumbrous feel in the air, and to listen to the flutter of the elm tree leaves, or the murmuring plash of the Luthen on the rocks below, was pleasanter than any speech.

"Janet," Alice said at last, not in the old, free-

hearted way in which she used to speak of him, but very shyly—"This is Mr. Bruce's birthday as well as mine. I thought of him this morning."

Oh, how Janet wished she could tell the poor girl that in her sorrow David had remembered her too. But she could not say it.

"Have you heard of him lately, Janet?"

"I have, Alice; only a day or two ago."

"And did he—has he said anything about—did he say he was sorry for me—does he think about me now? Perhaps he does not know."

"Yes, Alice, I told him, but——"

If Janet Bruce had had half the tact that some people possess, she would have called imagination to her aid and tossed up some neat little extempore message of kind remembrances, condolences, or something of the sort. But Janet had no imagination, except what was strictly reined in by truthfulness. What she knew to be truth she spoke, and nothing more. She was grieved and perplexed. Never before had her brother's strange behaviour so pained her.

"He does not mention you at all. Sometimes Davie is very silent about things that lie near to his heart."



Alice looked away over the harvest fields. She could see the track through which, just twelve months ago, they two had walked home in the quiet evening. She remembered what he had said then, his face as he bent down to twine those wheat ears in her hair. Had he, too, forgotten all? Were men all alike faithless and deceiving?

"Mr. Bruce used to be very kind to me once," she said, not bitterly, but with a quiet sort of sadness; and then she turned her face away, and though Janet could not see them, she heard the slow tears come falling one by one like rain drops on the ivy leaves.

She let the young girl weep on for a while; then she said to her in that patient, peaceful voice whose very tone was a benediction—

"Alice, by-and-by you will see to the end of this; I mean this trouble that has changed your life so. God deals our lives out to us by a link at a time, keeping all the rest in His own hand. What we can do is just to wait patiently. He has promised, you know, that those who fear Him shall not want any good thing."

"Yes. Mrs. Cromarty was reading that to me

only this morning. I think it was out of the Psalms. But, Janet, He is taking all my good things away. I have nobody left now but you and Mrs. Cromarty. Is that not wanting any good thing?"

Janet remembered the time, long ago now, when her own heart asked the same question. She paused for a little while. It was not her way to speak often on religious subjects, least of all those which touched her own past life. It cost her very much to break through the reserve which folded over all her inner life.

"Alice," she said reverently, "God's good things are sometimes very different from ours. You know His ways are not as our ways. We think that happiness, and home, and love, a quiet heart and faithful friends, are good things; but God sees that they will not always do for us, and so instead of them He gives great pain and sorrow. But Alice, if God sends even these, we may be quite sure they are 'good things.' We shall see it so by-and-by."

"I don't know," said Alice wearily. "Janet, do you think I shall ever be happy again?"

"Yes. God never spoils our lives for us. Nothing

that He sends is meant to crush us. Just the old sort of happiness, light and unthinking and careless, may not come back ; but instead of it we get peace,—deep, still, unbroken peace. Alice, I am quite sure that suffering never comes for anything else than this—to make us ready for the peace that lies beyond it.”

Janet had never spoken to Alice in this way before, never had she put aside her natural reticence and spoken so freely of the truths which through a long life of patient waiting, she had learned. But listening to them, Alice felt her soul gain strength. Perhaps it was their simple, personal truthfulness which made them precious. What she had known and felt, nothing but that, Janet Bruce declared.

Preachers speak to us, out of church pulpits, of grief ; of the sorrow which, like the centaur's poisoned tunic, clings to human life. They talk of patience, resignation—they exhort us to suffer out our three score years, and travel through this lonely path meekly and without a murmur. And then they put off their canonicals and go to their happy firesides, where loving wives wait for them, where child voices greet them, and soft child arms

are stretched out to clasp them. What do they know of sorrow? What right have they to teach others how to bear it? That is the best sermon, the most useful one, which many a suffering woman like Janet Bruce preaches from day to day by the silent influence of example, by little deeds of kindness, little words of love, coming warm and fresh from a heart which has learned from its own grief to touch all other sorrow with gentle reverence.

After this they were silent again for a long time. The Luthen babbled noisily on its way, slipping from rock to rock, and weltering in mazy circles round its tangled tresses of river weed. There came from the distant cornfields the sound of reapers' voices, the merry laugh of sunburnt girls binding up the sheaves, or little children garlanding each other with the loose ears that fell from the loaded waggons as they wound slowly through the meadows. And, at intervals, the Cathedral bell slowly rung out the quarters with a lazy boom that scarcely seemed to stir the air.

Presently, upon the high road, footsteps were heard coming nearer; and voices, or rather a voice, for it was only one that they could hear distinctly.


The speaker was Cuthbert Scrymgeour. He was talking in very low, gentle tones, just like those which Alice Grey had learned to know so well, whose loss left such a blank in the music of her life. The thick birch hedge hid him and his companion, whoever that companion might be, from view ; but as they passed the harbour it needed not a very quick ear to catch those daintily-modulated accents.

“Blanche, Blanche,” that luring voice said, “how can you doubt me? That child only woke a passing fancy. I never loved but you.”

There was a soft, gentle, cooing reply, that only Cuthbert Scrymgeour and the fluttering leaves might hear. Janet took Alice's cold, nerveless hand and led her away. For a while the poor girl seemed stunned and bewildered. Then she lifted her face to Janet. It was very pale, and the sudden cramp of pain had scarce smoothed out from the forehead.

“Janet, I thought awhile ago that Cuthbert's love was one of the ‘good things’ that God had given me. I don't think so now.”

## CHAPTER XX.

T was well for Alice that she had heard those chance words. They gave her strength for the life that came after. They swept away the last lingering cobwebs of hope, and left her heart empty, and swept, and garnished. Before that September afternoon the thought had not quite died out, that Cuthbert Scrymgeour might come back to her again. Her own nature was very trusting; she did not know how easy it is for some people to forget. And so long as the thought of his return was cherished, she could not settle down patiently to the stern, dry realities of the life that lay before her. Now, however, all was over. That short six months of

trusting happy love must be laid quite away, remembered no more again for ever. And though the thought of his faithlessness came very bitterly over her sometimes, it was better, far better, that she should know the worst.

The pinching hand of poverty began to be very painfully felt now in the little house at Norlands. Punctually at the appointed time Captain Clay's solicitor forwarded the quarterly stipend of twelve pounds, but notwithstanding all their care, it melted away long before the next was due. To eke it out, Mrs. Cromarty began to take in washing. Her fame in the getting up of fine linen was unrivalled, and in this way she was able to add a few shillings weekly to the little store. She would fain have laboured morning, noon, and night to save her young mistress from the need of toil ; but Alice would not suffer this, and roused herself, too, to the unwonted task of bread-winning. She was very skilful in all kinds of fancy work. Most of her friends—the friends who never noticed her now—had had themselves or their rooms decorated with some specimens of her handiwork in the shape of embroidery or painting. Her leather work used to be the admiration of the

Close ; she was never tired of surprising her friends with dainty little bouquets of flowers, modelled by her own deft fingers, or slipping into their favourite books the tastiest little markers of brodered silk, or garnishing their work-baskets unawares with pincushions of all shapes and makes. She sought now to turn this skill to some useful purpose, by getting orders for fancy-work from the Berlin shops, of which there were many in St. Olave's, or doing crochet and netted covers, which Mrs Cromarty tried to dispose of for her. But the profits of these things were very precarious. Often, after she had spent days and days over some elaborate cushion or anti-macassar, it would be refused by shop after shop, and finally returned upon her hands as unsaleable. Even when she could find a market for her wares, the profit upon them, after all the materials were bought and paid for, was very small ; most of the shops got their fancy things from Germany, and labour there was plentiful.

Then she turned her attention to fine needle-work. Here, too, she met with but little success. There was a great surplus of female population in St. Olave's, as, indeed, there appears to be in most Cathedral cities ; and ladies who had nothing else



to do with their time, gossiped it away at sewing meetings, greatly to the detriment, not only of private character, but also of the poor unfortunates who were dependent for a livelihood on the scanty pittance they could earn by plain sewing.

Vainly Mrs. Cromarty took the crescents and terraces of St. Olave's by house-row, in quest of work. The ladies preferred having their linen made up at sewing meetings; the work was better, and the cost less, besides the satisfaction of encouraging charitable objects. Nay, even some of the good people themselves, at whose doors Mrs. Cromarty and others like her sought employment, were in treaty for the taking in of plain sewing, and were open to engagements for shirt-making at a lower figure than would remunerate the poor sempstress who had her living to make out of the profits.

Finding that she could gain little or nothing by this sort of industry, Alice bethought herself of copying music. She knew that she did it very beautifully, quite as well as any professional hand. David Bruce had told her that, she remembered with a sigh. Ah! she often thought of David Bruce now, and longed for his strong arm to rest

upon. But he had forgotten her in her need. Janet rarely mentioned his name, or if Alice spoke it herself, said little of him. Something, or some one, had come between them. Perhaps he would marry some dark-eyed Italian girl, or flaxen-haired German *Fräulein* and she would never be remembered more. The thought of this gave Alice more pain than she cared to own.

After Mr. Bruce gave up the Cathedral organ, his place was supplied for a month or two by a young man from St. Olave's, until the Dean and Chapter had time to look out for a competent musician. They had fixed upon one at last, a graduate from Oxford, Professor Bright. He was dependent, as David Bruce had been, on his salary, but he lived in lodgings, and had no one but himself to support, so that he was not so straitened as the Westwood people were on their first arrival. Moreover, he brought one or two good introductions with him, which set him afloat at once amongst the Close families, and gave him standing room in one of the front apartments of the social edifice. He was a clever little man, tolerably fond of his profession, though not bringing to it the love and

reverence—to say nothing of the genius—which David Bruce did.

To Professor Bright, therefore, Alice went, taking with her some specimens of her skill in this department of art. He was a stranger, and had not known her in the days of her prosperity, or perhaps she dare not have faced his questions and criticisms. He received her kindly. The help which she could afford would be really valuable to him—though the Professor was too much a man of the world to let her know that—and he made an arrangement with her to copy out the chants used by the choristers in their daily practice. He agreed to give her sixpence a page for all that she did for him. If he could have supplied her with work enough to keep her continually employed, she might have earned a considerable sum in this way; but the amount of copy required was uncertain. Sometimes for a week or two together, no new chants or anthems were introduced, and then she was thrown back upon her scanty supply of needlework. However she toiled on patiently, and at last her own earnings, with those of Mrs. Cromarty, and the stipend furnished by Captain Clay, sufficed to keep them

from actual want. Of the future, the long, dark, dreary future which lay before her,—of the time when Mrs. Cromarty or Janet Bruce might be parted from her, Alice dared not think. She began to learn the invaluable art of taking “short views,” and suffered the morrow to take thought for itself.

When Alice came to Norlands, from Westwood, she brought with her all Mrs. Edenall's property, in the shape of clothes, books, jewellery, &c. There was also the desk in which Mrs. Edenall kept her papers, but into this, as yet, Alice had not had courage to look. Indeed, that relationship scarce appeared to be a real thing. She thought of it with a dim, misty sort of bewilderment. Even the graves of her parents at Norlands, those nameless mounds greening day by day in the sunshine, had no memories for her, and woke no tears. All of love and tenderness that she could remember, clustered round Mrs. Amiel Grey, the Aunt Amiel of that old happy time; and to her stately marble canopied tomb in St. Olave's cathedral, Alice never dared to go now.

From time to time there came to Westwood tidings of David Bruce, but no word of his return

home; and, stranger still, no mention of Alice. He was making himself a great name in the musical world. Sundry of the upper ten of St. Olave's, who had been touring it on the Continent, came back with glowing accounts of the distinction with which their old fellow-citizen as everywhere received. He was now residing at Munich, where he had made his first public appearance abroad. He devoted himself heart and soul to his profession, and his musical reputation was yielding him a goodly harvest of wealth as well as popularity. He never told Janet much of his successes, but she heard of them through the leading musical journals of the day, which were proud enough to chronicle the triumphs of British genius in the fastidious circles of Continental *élite*. He seldom mentioned the past either now, and the little inquiries about St. Olave's and its concerns, which once showed how tenderly he remembered the place, were gradually ceasing. His letters were chiefly occupied with details of his daily home life, sketches of Continental scenery, or anecdotes of the distinguished people with whom he mixed. And for her own part, Janet confined herself to Westwood news. After that first letter

in which he had so studiously ignored the mention of Alice and her affairs, his sister had taken the hint and given him no further information respecting her. And so that friendship, with all both of joy and disappointment that it had brought, seemed to be finally wound up. Janet could not account for her brother's silence, but she had unbounded faith in his truth, and she waited for time to solve the mystery.

In December, the Cathedral bells rang out a merry peal, and carriages with outriders in scarlet liveries and white satin favours careered hither and thither across the quiet Close. The marriage of Cuthbert Scrymgeour and Miss Egerton was the great event of the St. Olave's season. People said it was the most elegant wedding that had taken place in the Close since the late Bishop's daughter was married, thirty years ago, to the eldest son of Lord Granby. Very magnificent the bride looked in her trailing garments of white satin, with a wreath of lotus flowers crowning her braided hair, and a Honiton lace veil softening the lustre of her Spanish beauty. The ceremony was performed in the Cathedral by the Lord Bishop of St. Olave's

himself, Dr. Standish ; Professor Bright presiding at the organ, and the singers performing a full choral service. A beautiful wedding, people said it was, and very stately, as befitted everything conducted by Mrs. Archdeacon Scrymgeour.

The bride and groom spent their honeymoon in Rome, staying for a week in Paris as they came home. On their return, the Close was all alive for a few weeks with bridal parties, balls, suppers, dinners, assemblies, in fact a Festival on a small scale. After New Year's Eve, Mr. and Mrs. Cuthbert settled down to the cure of souls at Grassthorpe Rectory, and things came back to their old track. The Close turned itself over and went to sleep as soundly as ever ; the saints and martyrs on the Cathedral front donned their nightcaps of snow, and the whole place resumed its staid, hoary stillness.

Alice knew that the marriage was to take place ; but when and where, she had not heard. That very morning she came to the Cathedral with some chants which she had been copying for Professor Bright. She had hurried to get there before morning service began, and the Close

people were about. Generally at that hour of the day scarce a footstep disturbed the hush of the place, but to her surprise the nave this morning was scattered with groups of idlers who gradually formed themselves into a line between the long range of pillars that led to the choir entrance. She took her roll of music to the organist and was paid for it.

"What does the crowd mean, Smith?" she asked of the bellows-man, who stood at the door of his little den.

"It's a wedding, Miss. I thought all the place would ha' knowed; the Rev. Mr. Scrymgeour and Miss Egerton. Whisht, stand back, here's the procession a comin'."

"Alice had just time to retreat within the narrow doorway, ere a dozen snowdrifts in the shape of as many bridesmaids, in tulle veils and flowing robes of muslin, came fluttering past her; then there was a murmur of excitement amongst the ladies, and presently Blanche Egerton, in all the splendour of her brunette beauty floated up the broad aisle, leaning on the arm of the millionaire grandsire, whose scrip and three-per-cents had won her the position which she graced so well.



Her dark eyes gleamed through the lace that veiled her like a mist, there was a scarlet flush on her cheek, and with every step the lotus blossoms in her hair shook out a waft of perfume. As the procession moved slowly up the choir, a burst of jubilant music pealed forth from the organ.

"Please let me pass," Alice said, opening the little door through whose chinks she had watched the fairy-like vision. It was Mrs. Bullens, whose portly figure barred the way.

"Dearie me, won't ye stop, and see 'em come out? They say the bridegroom's beautiful, such a handsome man!"

"Please let me pass," said Alice, again, faintly.

She pulled her crape veil down over her face, and hurried through the gaping throng. No one took any notice of her; or if they did, thought that she might be some milliner's apprentice, who had just darted in to see the show, and was afraid of being late at her work.

She went through the little west door that led into the Close, the nearest way to Norlands Lane; passing on her way the gates of the Old Lodge, from which she once thought to have passed, a

bride. Poor Alice! and it was only a twelve-month this very day, since Cuthbert Scrymgeour in that little wainscotted room, whose mullioned window she could see through the trees, had claimed her for his wife.

## CHAPTER XXI.



WHOLE year dragged slowly, wearily on. Then David Bruce came home. He sent no word of his coming. He would fain steal quietly into the old city ; and, even before any home-greeting had been given him ; wander unrecognized once more, and perhaps for the last time, round its old familiar haunts. After that, if Janet wished it, they would go away. The place could be home to him no more now ; and he knew how silently she longed for their own country, for the old Court House at Perth, with its dark pine-woods, its outlook over the green and pleasant Inches, its friendships buried, but not forgotten,

its memories that could never die. Yes, they would go to Scotland again, and lie down to rest amidst the heather and the blue-bells. Only one more look at the old Cathedral city before it was left for ever.

He reached St. Olave's in the dim grey twilight of a January afternoon. He left his luggage at the station, and sauntered slowly through the narrow, well-remembered streets. With a strange yet not all-painful feeling, he found himself once more beneath the quaint overhanging houses, with their black timber fronts and pointed gables. He turned his steps into the Cathedral Close. The swarthy Minster towers loomed grimly out upon the darkening sky; with just the old weird, spirit-like wail, the wind came swooping down through the belfry windows. In the half-dark of early evening, no one recognized him—indeed, had it been broad daylight, few would have found in that bronzed and bearded stranger, with his foreign garb and lofty mien, much to remind them of the somewhat uncouth David Bruce, whom they had known two years ago.

Lights were shining out from some of the Close houses. The Bullenses were having a grand party,

chiefly merchant people from Millsmany—for they had not yet overcome the prejudices of the Close families—to celebrate the coming of age of the youngest son. The rooms were brilliantly illuminated; any passer-by might have heard strains of merry dance music, or, peering through the transparent lace curtains which draped the open windows, caught stray glimpses of ball-dresses all the colours of the rainbow, flashing hither and thither.

David Bruce paused for awhile at the little gate which led out of the Lodge garden into the Close. The old porter who kept the boundaries was sauntering about, on the look-out for strangers. He sometimes earned a sixpence or two by giving them scraps of information about the Cathedral, or explaining the meaning of the grotesque figures that gaped down from the gurgoyles. David stopped, and entered into conversation with him.

“The Old Lodge appears to have changed hands lately.”

“’Deed, sir, an’ it has,” replied the old man, looking keenly at him through his round spectacles. “Then ye’re happen not a stranger i’ the place. I took ye for one o’ the folk fra furrin parts. We gets a sight o’ furriners down here, sir.”

"I am not a foreigner," said Mr. Bruce, "and I do not belong to St. Olave's; but I know a little of the city. Who occupies the Old Lodge now?"

"It's let, sir, to some people they call Bullens, cotton folk, sir, fra Millsmany," and the old man looked scornful; he had the genuine St. Olave's blood in him. "They've a vast o' money, sir, but they ain't got no pedigree, and folks as hasn't got no pedigree isn't much thought on i' this here. The Bullenses has riz theirselves i' the world wi' cotton. The house were let, sir, when t' young leddy went away; there's been a vast o' changes of a late i' the Old Lodge, sir, but happen ye know that."

"Yes, said David, bitterly. "Mrs. Scrymgeour lives at Chapter House yet, I suppose?"

"Ay, marry, an' that she does. I reckon the Archdeacon's widdy thinks t' Minster couldn't hold itself together if she wasn't nigh hand to give an eye to it. But she goes a good bit to Grass-thorpe now, that's where her nevvie lives parson. You mind, maybe, she's got kin i' the Church."

"Yes, so I have heard. He is lately married is he not?"

"Ay, sir, nobbut a year ago. She were

over here last Monday was a week, and rare and viewly she looked. She's a beautiful young lady is Mrs. Cuthbert, and folks say she thinks all the world of her husband ; but then, sir, he's so handsome ; laws he's the handsomest man ever I see'd, and them's the sort as wins young leddies. It ain't int'lect, nor a true heart, nor a bonnie temper as does it now-a-days, but just good looks. But they're well matched for she's as sweet a lady as ye need wish to set eyes on, is Mrs. Cuthbert."

Alice, *Mrs. Cuthbert*. There was no more Alice Grey for David now, only "Mrs. Cuthbert." What a chilly feel it had, to hear those two little words spoken out loud, though he had said them over and over in his thoughts until they seemed familiar as household-words. "Mrs. Cuthbert." But the old man chattered on, stopping now and then to take a pinch of snuff out of the pocket of his rusty waistcoat.

"Folks says she'll have a sight o' money. Mrs. Archdeacon wouldn't let her nevvie marry nobody as hadn't a big purse. He's a deal thought of about here, is Mr. Scrymgeour, 'cause he reads the prayers so beautiful ; bless ye, sir, it's every bit

as good as singing, the way he does 'em, wi' sich an air and such beautiful moves as makes all the young leddies i' the choir look at him i'stead o' keepin' agate wi' their prayer-books. He's goin' to do 'em to-morrow mornin' sir, cause of it bein' a Saint day, an' there's a deal o' extra singin' at sich times, more as I take it than God Almighty makes much count on; but other folks knows better 'n me. I goes to the prayers reg'lar myself, but they ain't much yield's ever I see. Maybe ye wouldn't like me to show ye round the place, sir, it's light enough yet to see a good bit. A gentleman gived me sixpence nobbut yesterday for showin' him the stalties up o' the west front."

David slipped a shilling into the old man's hand, but declined being shown round the building. "She thinks all the world of him." Well, that was just as it should be. He ought to have felt very glad to hear it, but somehow the gladness was not forthcoming. It was getting dark now, and he strode fiercely across the Close, as though trampling down the bitter memories that rose. By the time he reached Westwood Lane, night had fallen, and with a pleasant friendly glow the lights of Westwood Cottage, his old home, flickered



through the leafless branches of the chestnut and linden trees.

Not fiercely now, but with slow, gentle footsteps, stooping down now and then to mark how the little snow-drops were pushing their white faces through the grass, he crossed the path and went round to the side door.

Tibbie was sitting with her knitting by the kitchen fire. She heard some one coming, and taking up her little oil lamp, opened the door cautiously, for she had a genuine national aversion to "fremd folk," as she called them; and except the postman, milkman, and an odd vagrant or two, masculine footsteps were seldom heard on that track.

She did not wait to hear the stranger's errand, but holding the lamp so that its rays fell full upon his bearded face, she said in not the gentlest of accents—

"Gin ye be speerin' for my leddie, she's no' in, the nicht; ye may ca' again i' the morn." And then she was about to shut the door in his face.

David Bruce lifted his eyes to her with the look that used to be like sunshine in that home.

"Tibbie, do ye no ken me?"

Down went the lamp, oil and everything, on the clean stone flags.

"Sure ! it's Maister Davit come home agin !" she said, shaking her blue check apron vehemently, as though setting away a brood of chickens ;—it was an outlet she had for expressing her feelings when they became too intense for words—" Its Maister Davit come home ! Eh, but," and the old woman peered up into his travel-worn face with its new garniture, " I'm thinkin' ye're no ken-speckle to the maister as went awa', wi' a' thae hairy duds upo' the front o' ye. Come yer' ways ben," and picking up the prostrate lamp, she led the way into the parlour.

" Miss Janet's awa' sin' the morn, I didna' just speer at her whar she would gang, but I'm thinkin' she's visitin' upon her that was Miss Alice Grey. There's no Miss Grey the noo, Maister Davit ; happen ye ken that."

" Yes, Tibbie, I have heard it."

That was all David Bruce said, but the voice was tired and faint-like, and as he said it he leaned wearily against the mantel-piece.

" Ye're outworn the nicht, Maister," said Tibbie, bustling about, first in quest of his slippers, which

kept their old place in the corner closet, then to fetch his loose coat and some cushions for the great chair which she drew to the fireside. "Will I get you the tea, and will ye be for scones or oat cake?"

"When I'm rested, Tibbie, not now. I just want to be quiet."

"Ou ay, ye were aye for quietness, and I'll no keep ye back from it. Maybe ye'll just gang to sleep a wee bittie while Miss Janet comes hame. An' will I bring ye the licht, or ye'll bide yer lane i' the gloamin'. Ye were fond o' the gloamin', Maister Davit."

"And I think the gloamin' is fond of me, Tibbie. No, I won't have the lamp, thank you; and don't let me keep you away from your knitting any longer."

She left him, giving an eye first round the little room to see that all was tidy. But, before she finally shut the door, she stood on the threshold a moment or two for a leisurely view of him—just an honest, faithful, affectionate look at the maister, who had been "aye gude to her sin' he was a wee bit laddie i' the Pairth hoose."

"He's unco' still the nicht," she said to herself, when she was once more settled down by the kitchen fire with her knitting—"He's unco' still the nicht. I'm thinkin' some o' thae foreign lasses has cast the glamour over him, and we'll be havin' a weddin' afore lang. He needna have sought so far for a bride, if bonnie Miss Alice—bless her!—had held her ain a wee bit langer. He'd no have cast her off for want o' the siller, as yon fair-faced Southron has done."

Meanwhile, Janet Bruce was making her way home, slowly and thoughtfully, from the cottage at Norlands.

## CHAPTER XXII.



WHEN Tibbie had gone, David sat down in the great chair, which she had drawn to the fire, and his eye slowly wandered over the familiar little room with the restful look, of one who comes home again after long absence. Nothing in it was changed from that other night, two years ago now, when he had returned from London, flushed with success and full of bright expectancy. The success was his still, proud as ever it had been, but the hope was away.

Tibbie had tidied up the room a little while before, ready for Janet's return. The firelight skimmed daintily over the silver-traceried paper,

and pencilled out upon the white blind the delicate outline of the ivy leaves, which, winter and summer, Janet always kept in the little vase upon the window-seat. His music table stood in the corner, by the piano, with writing materials and manuscripts upon it, just as he used to leave them when he was busy over the copying out of "Jael;" and beside them was Janet's work-basket, with the perennial little half-finished sock, and her favourite book, "Thoughts of Peace," lying on the top, as she had left them when she went out. Even the great arm-chair where he was sitting—there was a thin place on the horse-hair covering of one of the arms—how well he remembered, that dim November afternoon before he went to London, how Alice had sat beside him on the footstool, and amused herself by pulling out the long hairs and plaiting them into fanciful knots, as she leaned her head down upon his knee. Now that bright head had another resting-place. Alice — "Mrs. Cuthbert Scrymgeour." David turned sharply round, so that he might not see the worn place. What a different coming home this was! Placing side by side the David Bruce of to-night and the David Bruce of two

years ago, he scarce could know them for the same.

What a strange collection that would be, if one could gather together the cast-off garments which the soul has worn!—the vestures of old hopes, joys, longings, which clothed us once, but have been clutched away by the iron-strong fingers of Fate, or rent by the thorns of disappointment, or have fallen from us, piecemeal, as the years went on. Ah! how we should weep to meet them again, and handle their tattered shreds, and remember how brave they once were! After all, who knows but, in some yet undiscovered limbo of this wide universe, there may be a collection of this sort?—a rag fair of spiritual garments, filched from souls as they jostle through the crowded highways and byways of life. There is the white robe of baby innocence, unstained yet by thought or deed of wrong; the vesture of the child-heart, gay and gladsome, wrought like Joseph's coat of many colours—like Joseph's coat, too, torn often by some wild beast of the forest; the blood-red robe of passion, the jewel-broidered garb of love, the winding-sheet wherein some dead hope was buried; the shroud, stained

over with tears, that wrapped a joy too bright to last. A grewsome array, truly; and ever the spoiler's hand filches fresh treasures and lays them there, until at last the years go on no more, and the whole company of Christ's faithful people find themselves robed for ever in the white raiment, clean and fine, which no spoiler's hand can touch; the brightness of whose purity no taint of sin shall find leave to mar.

Thinking, perhaps, such thoughts as these, David Bruce did not hear footsteps in the room, nor did he know that any one was there, until two white trembling hands were laid upon his shoulder—

“Brother Davie!”

He turned quickly round. There was no tumultuous greeting between them, no glowing outburst of delight. The past had held too much of sorrow for that. Just one close, loving hand-clasp, one long look of trusty friendship—so they met after that weary parting.

David stirred the fire into a blaze; then putting off Janet's bonnet, and smoothing back the bands of her glossy black hair, he held her to him, and looked tenderly down into the pale face



that was uplifted to his. A little paler, perhaps, than when he saw it last, but just as quiet ; telling no story of the deaths upon which it had gazed, nor the bitter conflict which had passed over the soul within. Years hence, lying in confined rest, Janet Bruce's face could wear a smile no quieter.

David was more changed. Two years of foreign travel had somewhat remoulded his garb and aspect. He had now the bold, upright, majestic port of a man accustomed to face the world and command its homage ; the port of a man who has made his own place, and stands in it as a king should stand. A curling beard and moustache hid the worn, sharp lines of the lower part of his face, and covered the mouth, which wore an expression somewhat bitter now,—bitterer than it used to be in those first years of disappointment and struggling.

He drew the little low chair near to his, and then they sat down hand in hand, heart to heart, just as in the old long-ago time.

“ I did not think to find you gone, Jean ; you were aye content to sit by your ain ingle neuk.”

"I don't often leave it, Davie, but sometimes it's dree work sitting my lane at nights. I—I had gone to see Alice."

Janet spoke this last sentence hesitatingly, looking up to her brother's face the while for some touch of grieving sadness. But she looked in vain. The lips only took a sterner bend, the light that gleamed out from the deep-set grey eyes grew colder.

Janet was perplexed, disappointed. She had never found him wanting in tenderness before. She had thought, she had almost hoped, that his first question would be for Alice. So earnest was the sympathy of her unselfish heart, that she could have given up even her own blessed birth-right of sisterly ministration, so that this desolate, unprotected girl might find shelter in his faithful care.

"Oh," he said by-and-by, "if you have been there, you are home early; it is a long ride, I suppose." And then, after a pause, in which he seemed to be tracking out some painful thought—

"Janet, we have no one but each other now; no one but each other."

He leaned his cheek down upon her hand, and

there fell a long silence between them. Janet did not care to break it by any trifling inquiries about his journey, or what had befallen him during those dreary years of separation. That she was sitting by his side again, that she could hold his hand in hers, and look up into his face, was enough for her.

That grand still face ; it had settled down now into the habitual melancholy of one for whom the best of life is passed ; it had the worn look which mental suffering or anxiety of any kind continually chiselling at the features, gives. Nevertheless David Bruce, take him altogether, was what the world calls a fine-looking man, a very fine-looking man. And his was the handsomeness which would increase, not decline with coming years.

"Janet," he said at last, in rather an abrupt, grating voice, "Janet, would you like to go away from St. Olave's ?"

"How, brother Davie ?"

"I mean, how would you like to go back into Scotland, quite away from here ? You know I am rich now, rich at least in money and position," and there was a harsh ring in his voice which Janet had never heard before. "I could buy back

the Court House at Perth, and you could live in the old home again, just at we used to do years and years ago. Then we would try to put away everything that has happened here ; just lay these two years of our lives to rest."

"How would you like it, Davie?"

"I don't say anything about what I would like, I just ask you, will you go?"

Janet turned her face from him into the shadow. She was silent for a moment or two, not more. The thought of Alice, desolate and unfriended, came first into her heart. Whilst she lived, the child of him whom she had loved so truly, should never be left alone. But she did not tell her brother that. She gave him her answer calmly, without a quiver or a tremble in her voice. Once more lifting her face to his, she said:—

"Brother Davie, two years ago I would have liked fine to go back to the old home, and the old friends. But now, wherever Douglas Ramsay's grave is, is home to me, and I'll even stay by it till I die."

## CHAPTER XXIII.



EXT morning David and Janet Bruce went together to the morning prayers. Janet took her usual place near what used to be Mistress Amiel Grey's stall, and David went into the organist's pew. A stranger occupied it now, but Mr. Bruce's card was a passport wherever its owner presented it.

David's heart beat quickly as he ascended the stair, and passed into the little well-remembered sanctum. Verily St. Olave's was no place to wipe out old associations. The ruling spirit of conservatism kept everything in just the old track. Not a change had been made in the grey, dusty Cathedral since the last afternoon when Mr.

Bruce officiated there, the afternoon when Lettice had come to summon him to Mistress Amiel Grey's bedside. As she told him Alice's message, he had unwittingly grasped one of the delicately carved oaken bosses of the canopy, and a leaf broke off in his hand. The gap was there still, broidered over now with a lacework of cobwebs, and the fragment of carving lay on the projecting capital of a pillar near by, untouched; one might tell that by the dust which lay so thick upon it. There were the old prayer and chant-books, with their brown, worm-eaten leather binding sending out a musty, century-old smell into the little chamber; and there was the rent in the crimson curtains through which Alice had peered down, that long ago morning, to watch Mrs. Edenall pace, in grave, queen-like majesty, up the broad choir aisle.

Professor Bright wished his distinguished visitor to take the musical part of the service, but David declined, and promised instead, to play the concluding voluntary. Whilst the organist chose out the anthems, he leaned over the curtain and watched the people assemble. Not much change in them either. The almsfolk came first, accord-

ed the choir, for the Cathedral rules ordered that it should be locked within twenty minutes after the close of each service; but the people clustered round the organ stair and about the nave, listening in eager, speechless interest to the magician who poured over them such wondrous strains of harmony.

Mr. Bruce was still playing, when there came a gentle knock at the door of the organ pew.

"It's the young lady, sir, as copies for you," said the bellows-blower, reaching out from his recess, and opening the door. "Is she to come in?"

"No, I am engaged with this gentleman, and cannot see Miss Brandon now. She must come again in the afternoon."

"Pray don't let me interfere with any engagements. Perhaps it may be inconvenient to the young person to call again. Has she come from far?" said David.

"Only from Norlands, a matter of three miles or so, and I daresay she is a good walker. But if you don't object I'll see her and have done with it. Smith, tell the young person to come in."

She came. David turned for a moment, and

saw that the visitor was a girl dressed in deep and somewhat rusty mourning. He resumed his playing, and gave no heed to the conversation which went on between them.

"I have brought the music, Mr. Bright. Will it be convenient to pay me for it this morning? It is two months now since I brought back the last chants."

The voice was scarcely more than a whisper, so low that through the music David did not hear it.

"I think you must call again. I've only a sovereign in my purse, and I suppose you can't change it."

"No, sir ; but if you like I will go out and bring some silver. It will not take me long."

"Longer though than I care to wait. Excuse my interrupting you, Mr. Bruce, but could you accommodate us? This young person seems anxious to be paid."

Was it something in her attitude and bearing, or was it the single curl creeping out from the curtain of her crape bonnet, that reminded Mr. Bruce of Alice Grey? He could not see her face, for she had shrunk behind a stone pillar and was



looking into the choir, bending far down over the curtain. He only noticed that her hand trembled very much as Professor Bright put the money into it. He turned to the organ again.

"I am sorry to tell you, Miss Brandon," said the organist, "that I shall not require your services any longer. One of the choristers offered only yesterday to undertake the copying in return for extra musical instruction. You have always managed it very well, but my salary obliges me to be economical, and there is at present no allowance for the transcribing of the church music. I need not detain you any longer, I believe you will find the money I have given you quite right. Good morning, Miss Brandon. I shall be happy to recommend you in case you should apply for other employment of the same kind."

There was just a low quick gasping breath. She turned towards the door, but her hand shook so that she could scarcely open it.

"Allow me," said Mr. Bruce, coming forward. He was not much of a ladies' man in a general way, but he was always ready to give help when it was needed; and he remembered of old that the door

of the organ pew had a private theory of its own about opening and shutting. Before he could reach it though, she had pulled it open with a desperate effort, and was away down the narrow little staircase.

"Nice copying that, isn't it, for a woman?" said Professor Bright, throwing the manuscript carelessly upon the music desk as David finished his overture. "The young lady does it for a living. She has seen better days, and I suppose doesn't like the publicity of going out governessing."

It was strangely like those manuscripts of Alice Grey's, which were treasured so carefully in David's portfolio; the same clear round notes, the same finely-formed strokes and sharp Italian hand. He scanned it earnestly.

"It is not often non-professionals copy so well as this, but perhaps the young lady teaches music."

"No, I don't fancy she is equal to that. An old fellow who lives in the College Yard here, taught her; and then she is dainty rather in everything she does. You would notice that from her dress. Poor girl, I'm sorry not to keep on employing her, but you see I must consider my

own pocket. The salary here is so very small."

David could quite understand that; he remembered the time when sixpence a sheet for music copying was more than he could afford to pay.

"I don't know if you are aware of the facts," continued Professor Bright, packing the music away along with the rest of the chants. "You have been absent from St. Olave's some time, have you not?"

"Not quite two years."

"Ah, well, then the affair has taken place since you left. The young lady's name is Brandon, and she lives up at Norlanda, in a little cottage that stands alone before you come to the village."

"The house formerly occupied by Mistress Amiel Grey?"

"The same. You remember the old lady then? I don't. I believe she died some time before I came to the organ, but I've heard a great deal about her—high family, courtly manners, all that sort of thing, I suppose, that people make so much of here. She had a niece, at least so it was supposed."

"Yes, Miss Alice Grey. When I left St. Olave's, she was on the point of marriage to a

clergyman. I presume she is now Mrs. Cuthbert Scrymgeour, of Grassthorpe Rectory."

David Bruce forced himself to say this in a matter of fact, business like sort of way.

The Professor laughed a little, short, good-tempered laugh.

"Points are dangerous things, Mr. Bruce, and people slip off them sometimes. So did the young lady in question. The fact is, things turned out very awkwardly. She was found not to be a niece of Mrs. Grey's at all, but an illegitimate child of some person, a woman named Brandon, living in St. Olave's. I forget the name her mother went under, being, as I said before a stranger here. Of course, when the truth came out, she had no claim to the property, and the heir-at-law, a Captain Clay, from abroad, took it all, every penny, but a little stipend which he allows her just to keep her from absolute starvation."

David Bruce's control served him well. His voice changed not from its old steady tones as he remarked:—

"That was unfortunate, very. But the marriage."

"Dropped through; blew over; came to nothing.

Painful thing for Mr. Scrymgeour, but of course he broke it off at once, as soon as ever the facts got out. You know it would never do for a man in his position to marry a—well a girl without ever a rag of respectability about her.”

David Bruce smiled. A quiet smile, very, just rippling up to the deep set grey eyes, and moistening them with what might be tears, or possibly a twinkle of humour. Professor Bright thought it was the latter.

“You’re smiling. I daresay you imagine it was the money more than the respectability that made the gentleman take fright. Well, I won’t say which it was. At all events his affections were not deeply blighted, for six months after, he married a young lady, the belle of the Close, Blanche Egerton, a splendid brunette, with the most magnificent eyes you ever saw, and such hair! She came in with the Archdeacon’s widow to the prayers this morning. You would see her, I daresay, in a scarlet cloak and black hat.”

“Yes, and Alice—I mean Miss Brandon?”

“Lives up at Norlands, as I told you. Nobody takes any notice of her now, of course. Captain

Clay lets her have the house for nothing, and she ekes out her allowance by working for the shops and copying music. Starving sort of thing, I should fancy."

David turned abruptly to the organ. A few quick, passionate chords, full of fiery vehemence, and then that old Cathedral rang with such a peal of jubilant harmony, as had never before echoed through its long aisles of clustered columns. On and on he played, his whole soul pouring itself out upon the music. His face grew bright with the triumph shining through; his whole form seemed to heighten and dilate with a strange majesty. Hope, joy, tenderness, longing, all spoke out in that wondrous melody. It was David Bruce's "Te Deum," the outburst of a prayer which no words could speak.

Suddenly the music ceased. Without a word of farewell to the astonished Professor, Mr. Bruce took up his hat and gloves and hurried away. It had been whispered about in the city that the great composer had come back, and was now playing at the Cathedral, and hundreds of people were clustering round the organ, listening to the wondrous music, or waiting to catch a sight of

the performer. But he pressed through them all, giving no glance of recognition to the smiles which were poured on him from many a fair face. Right onward he steered his way, until he reached the little door that led out from the west end into the Close. There Janet was waiting for him.

He took her hand in his, and hurried her away out into the quiet Close, past the grim, aristocratic old houses, and shady little back terraces, never slackening his pace until they reached Westwood Lane, where not a footstep save their own was to be heard.

"Janet," he began, and now the first gush of excitement spent, his voice was very feeble, his face deathly pale, "Janet, why did you not tell me of this? Why did you keep it from me?"

"What, Davie?" she said, quietly.

"About Alice," and Janet felt the hand that held hers tighten its grasp almost to pain.

"I did write you all about it," she said, "and sent the letter to you to Leipsic."

"How long back?"

"This is January. I sent it a year ago last August."

"That explains it. I left Leipsic early in August just after I had got the letter in which you said that she was to be married in a few days. Janet, if you knew what the time since then has been."

Janet knew somewhat of its hardness, from the lines it had graven on her brother's face.

"Who has told you now, Davie?"

"She came into the organ pew whilst I was there. A poor little trembling thing. I don't know if she knew me again, but she did not speak to me, and I did not recognize her, for the organist called her Brandon. She had come to bring some copied music that he pays her to do, and the poor child sighed so wearily when he told her she was not to have any more. After she was gone he told me who she was, and that Cuthbert Scrymgeour had cast her off because she had neither name nor fortune to give him."

"Did he tell you any more than this?"

"Only that instead of being Mistress Amiel Grey's niece, she was the daughter of a person named Brandon, and that she was left almost entirely dependent upon her own exertions. Tell me all about it, Janet."



They had reached the cottage now. They went into the little parlour, and there sitting together hand in hand, they talked over all the past. Janet told him, in her plain matter of fact way, the story of Alice's birth and parentage, as she had had it partly from Alice's own lips, and partly from Mrs. Cromarty.

"Last time I wrote to you, David, I told you about Douglas Ramsay's death, and Mrs. Edenall's, but no more than that. I knew you had much to weary you, and to have said it all could do you no good."

David pressed his sister's hand. She went on—

"I was sitting by her the night they brought her home dead, and Mrs. Cromarty came into the room. She told me she had seen her before, that she had lived maid with her when she was a child, and that her real name was Brandon, Marian Brandon. When she was very young she eloped from her father's house with a stranger who professed to marry her."

"Ha!" said David, "and Alice is their child. Is it so?"

"Stay, brother, I have not told you all. This

stranger wronged her very much. He took her into Germany, and there deserted her. She came home, a poor, miserable outcast, in time to see her father die; then her child was born, and she became insane. This stranger, brother Davie, was Douglas Ramsay."

"Jeanie, my poor sister Jeanie!" and David Bruce drew the pale face down to his breast. Janet let it rest there for awhile; then raised it and went on calmly as ever.

"There were no witnesses to the marriage, and he destroyed the lines that she might have no claim upon him. Her father and mother were very wealthy people, and of good family, but after they died, her relatives quite disowned her. When she came out of the asylum, she was told that her child was dead, and not being able to remain in the neighbourhood where she was known, she went and lived in complete retirement in Cumberland. From there she came to us. Mrs. Amiel Grey knew the Brandon family, and offered to take the child on condition that its parents never claimed it. So Alice was sent to the Old Lodge, and the people of St. Olave's have always imagined that she was a niece of Mrs. Grey's."

"And Mrs. Edenall never knew that Alice was her own daughter!"

"Never. She always imagined that her child was dead. I did not know that she was a mother until the afternoon of Douglas Ramsay's funeral, when she told me something of her history. I don't think she mourned much for the loss of it; she knew the stain of its birth could never be wiped out."

"Tell me more about Alice!"

David's voice sounded very differently now, from when he had spoken that name the night before. Janet went on mechanically with her story.

"Only a week or two before the time fixed for the marriage, Alice was accidentally looking into an old cabinet in the drawing-room, and found a letter addressed to her by her aunt, to be read after Mrs. Grey's death. She opened it, and found that it contained her own history. Cuthbert Scrymgeour was sitting by her at the time she read it. The next day, Captain Clay proved his claim as heir-at-law; and, as soon as the legal conference was over, Cuthbert Scrymgeour sent back Alice's letters and broke off the engagement. Of course, the stain of Alice's parentage was made the excuse for

this, and so Mr. Scrymgeour has kept his credit as a man of honour."

"And you, Jeanie, what did you do?"

"Mrs. Cromarty told me of it next day, and I went to her. I found the house all in confusion. Alice was sitting in her own room; she seemed to be in a stupor of grief, and there was no one to comfort her. So I brought her here, and kept her with me until Mrs. Cromarty had got the cottage at Norlands ready for her. Poor child, it was a sair grief to her at first, but I think the bitterness of it is passed now."

"Did she love him with her whole heart, Jeanie?"


"I don't think it. He pleased her fancy, and just petted her from morning to night, but he was no stay for her to rest upon. It is licht love, Davie, that cannot hold true in the cauld blast. But I'm vexed for her now, the darling; her life is so different to what it used to be. She labours all day at that music-copying, and in the gloaming, when it is too dark to write, she does crochet and fancy-work for the shops. Mrs. Cromarty gets a little washing or plain sewing, sometimes; and that, with Alice's pittance from Captain Clay, is all they have to depend upon."

David turned his face away.

"Alice! little Alice!"

And in the deep, low-spoken tenderness of those words, Janet knew how surely ere long that poor friendless girl would find a quiet resting-place in her brother's heart. And Janet murmured not. She knew that, for him even as for herself, to love once was to love for ever.

## CHAPTER XXIV.

T would seem that no life is complete without the refining and purifying influence of sorrow. Not through hope or joy, or even through busy working, but through suffering only, are we, like our Captain, to be made perfect.' And so into Alice's life, dimming for awhile all its sunshine and freshness, this needful night of grief had come, to nourish with wholesome shadow the thoughts which over-much brightness might have withered and scorched.

She worked on very patiently at her new duties. By-and-by her life of labour seemed more real than the long, pleasant child-rest which had gone before it. That came to be almost like a dream,

a peaceful, beautiful dream, only remembered now and then.

She came home from the Cathedral that morning, weary and dispirited. The pittance which, small though it was, had helped to keep the wolf from the door, was gone now. After leaving Professor Bright, she had gone to one and another of the organists of the different churches in St. Olave's, to ask if they could give her employment, but all had declined her services. She must turn to needlework again. Mrs. Cromarty had brought some home that morning, which had been given her as a great favour by one of the Close families. It was a set of cravats, fine cambric cravats for Canon Crumpet, who had just come into residence. They were lying on the table now ; Alice had been stitching at one of them until her eye-balls ached and her weary fingers almost refused to guide the needle. If she could have laid the work down, and had a real good cry, it would have been such a relief. But she could not afford the luxury of tears now ; they made her eyes smart and her head ache, and then the stint of work which she set herself had to be left undone.

At last, however, she had been forced to rest,

and now in the half twilight of that winter afternoon, she stood at the window, looking out over the grey moorland. The sky was all one even leaden tint, save just a little bit over St. Olave's Cathedral, where the mist had broken away and a glimpse of clear blue sky looked through, hinting of sunshine somewhere. So often in *our* life track we stand closed round by gloom and mist, yet never so utterly dark but one little rift remains to which we may look and catch a ray of the sunshine of God's love. But Alice's eyes were blinded ; she could not see it now.

She was changed, sadly changed. Poor child ! she had neither art nor pride to hide the wound which Cuthbert Scrymgeour's faithlessness had given her. She was not, she never would be, one of those grand heroic creatures who, sore wounded by a sudden sword-stroke in the battle, fight on bravely after it, bravely as ever ; never showing, by tear or sigh, how sharp the anguish is ; even fighting all the more desperately, and winning nobler victories, in the strength of suffering. Neither was she of that lofty sort who, having seen their soul palace swept utterly away, set themselves with patient fortitude to travel



the rest of the way homeless, and beggared of all that earth can give ; content so only Heaven bring them rest. She was but a child, and as a child she suffered.

David Bruce was back again, that was the thought which filled her mind now. Filled it, not with joy and comfort, not with the glad certainty of coming rest, but with a weary, sickening sort of disappointment. All that his return could do would be to close Westwood to her. She dare not go there now and meet his cold, unsympathizing face, or listen to the story of his triumphs,—triumphs which had made him forget her griefs. That chance encounter in the organ-pew had struck a great chill through her. She had so often pictured their meeting, the joy it would be to sit by him again, and look into those steady, trusty eyes. But this was before her trouble came. Now they had met—and how ? He had not even turned to look at her, or told her by a single word that he remembered the old friendliness. He was the distinguished stranger now, she the penniless little dependant, toiling hard for daily bread, and scarce able to win that. Ah ! was *this* not wanting any good thing ?

Those cravats must be done. Mrs. Canon Crumpet had sent special orders that they were to be sent home, starched and got up, by the end of the week, and this was Thursday. But, no; she must rest just a little longer. Her head ached very much; her eyes were hot and tired. She leaned her arms on the broad window-seat and pressed her forehead against the glass for coolness.

It was very sad to see her face; there was no anger, no bitterness in it, only a mute, questioning look, like some gentle pet creature that has been grievously wounded, and lifts up its wondering eyes, asking for pity. She would never be the same Alice again that she was before that heavy blow had come. The gay, glad-hearted, joyous look was gone; she had quite lost the airy, swaying grace that used to mark every step and gesture. She was no gleam of sunshine now, no strain of merry music; rather she seemed like a bruised flower, ready with one more blast to fall to the ground and be swept away. Still, when the gleam of sunshine is faded, and the strain of music gone, we soon forget them; it is the poor broken flower that we tend so lovingly; there is

hope of it that it may revive and bloom once more.

She turned her head. David Bruce stood in the doorway. He had been watching her, unseen, for the last half hour. As she caught sight of him, her face brightened, and she made as if she would have sprung to meet him in the old trustful way. But, before that impulse had time to grow into action, she remembered the change that had come over them both, and drew back again—humbly, meekly, not even lifting her eyes as she placed a chair for him by the fire.

David Bruce would have taken her to his heart there and then, and ended all her toil; but something in the staid quietness of her manner kept him back. She took up her work, and stood at a little distance from him.

"It is very kind of you to come and see me," she said. "You see my life has changed very much, lately."

There was a sort of dignity in her way, even the least touch of pride. David Bruce had not offered her his sympathy, she would not ask it now.

"Alice, until this morning, I thought that you were the wife of Cuthbert Scrymgeour."

She just lifted her face to his for one moment, then bent it, crimson with stifled emotion, over her work.

"No, I am no wife for Mr. Scrymgeour now."

There was such broken-down hopelessness in the way she said this. She kept up bravely for a moment or two; then the work fell from her fingers, and she buried her face in her hands, weeping silently.

David Bruce looked at her as she stood there before him, leaning against the low mantel-piece, half turning away that he might not see her tears; the young head that once used to wear its coronal of golden curls with such careless grace, bowed down in shame and weariness.

"Alice!"

She raised herself, and looked steadily through her tears into his face. Her eyes fell before all that they read in his. David Bruce's apologies, explanations, all failed him; the old tenderness, held back so long by mistake and misunderstanding, overflowed his heart again. He held out his arms to her as she stood there, the poor little forsaken, friendless thing.

"Alice, you are very tired. Come to me and rest."

And Alice went.

If David Bruce loved her when wealth and plenty shrouded her round, when the pride of rank and the iron barriers of social caste parted them, she was ten times dearer to him now when she crept, shorn of all these things, into his arms, bringing to him nothing but the whiteness of her womanhood, and even that soiled by the mother from whom she had received it.

An hour later they sat there yet, her head bowed upon her hand, the tears still falling one by one over the fingers that clasped his so closely.

But the little rift of blue sky had widened out; and a single beam of sunlight pouring through it, rested on them both, for an earnest of the spring time that should come ere long.

## CHAPTER XXV.



HAT was January, and in April they were to be married. David was impatient to get the little blossom, once so rudely nipped, back again into the keeping of his own loving heart.

It was a different courtship, very, from the one that was even yet fresh in Alice's memory. No dainty compliments came sprinkling down upon her like sugared bon-bons, no pretty speeches or honeyed words of flattery, such as she had lived upon during that short spell of sunshine. But as time after time David Bruce came to the little cottage at Norlands, and she nestled into the shelter of his strong protecting tenderness, she felt

that one look from those steady, honest eyes, one word from that voice whose every tone was full of brave out-spoken truth, more than overbalanced all the caresses which Cuthbert, in his elegant chivalry, had offered. That was the froth and sparkle, this the clear wine of life.

It was the night before the wedding. David had come on his last visit to Norlands, and the two sat together in the bow-window, that looked out into the pleasant old-fashioned garden, greening now in the freshness of early spring-time. Before he came, Alice had been opening and re-arranging the carved oak cabinet that used to belong to Mistress Amiel Grey. Captain Clay had allowed her to select one or two things from the Old Lodge furniture, and this had been brought to Norlands amongst them. She used it now to keep some of her own little treasures, relics of the old time ; also it contained her mother's papers and the pocket-book which Mrs. Edenall had treasured through the lonely years of her worse than widowhood. Alice had turned away from them to take her place by David's side, but the door of the cabinet was open still ; and whilst his arm kept her near him he was playfully taking up one after ano-

ther of her little possessions, and making her tell him its story.

His face paled somewhat at the sight of the familiar tartan on the cover of the old purse. He took it up.

"May I open this, Alice?"

"Yes," she said, without lifting her face, which rested on his arm, "I don't think there is anything in it but a few old papers. The inside has been nearly all torn out."

He opened it. There were three or four wheat ears in one of the compartments, brown and withered now as if they had been kept for a long time. David knew them again. He remembered how, as he took them out of Alice's hair that long-ago night in the Norlands cornfields, she had asked for them, and he had given them into her hand. And as they came along home she had played with them, twisting the stalks into fanciful shapes. The marks were there still.

"So the little girl remembered me then," he said, fastening the brown wheat ears once more into her hair. But though he said it lightly, there was a mist of tears in his eyes, and his lips trembled as he spoke the words. Those brown



withered things told him what he longed so much to know, that the child had held him in her thoughts through all that long waiting time, and that the bond which bound them now was neither new nor strange.

Alice turned, and her face flushed all over.

"Oh, Mr. Bruce! I did not know," and she stretched out her hand to snatch them from him. In doing so, the purse fell to the ground. David picked it up. The fall had loosened a spring inside, and a little pocket opened in which was a scrap of paper all mildewed and discoloured. These words were scrawled untidily upon it,—

"Douglas Ramsay and Marian Brandon, married at Errol, June 14, 18—."

There was a long silence in the quiet little room. Alice felt herself drawn closer and closer—she knew not why—to David Bruce's heart, and she felt his warm kisses falling fast upon her cheek and forehead.

So then the white little hand that lay in his, marred though it might be by trace of toil, was free from stain, and the blood that flowed through its blue veins was pure, untainted as his own. He should never need to blush now that his wife was

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not nobly born ; he should never fear to place her side by side with the proudest in the land. He could not love her with a truer, tenderer love ; but it was grand to know that the world's scorn could not reach her now.

It was a very quiet wedding. In the early sunlight of that April morning, while yet the dew lay upon the grass, and sparkled in the blue violet cups, Janet Bruce rode down to the cottage, and fetched Alice and Mrs. Cromarty to Westwood church. David was waiting for them there, just as quiet and grave as ever. There was no bridal pomp this time ; no sheen of satin nor flutter of orange blossoms ; no peal of marriage bells, nor scattering of flowers along the path to the church. Canon Hewlet married them. The choral service was wanting, that pealed forth from the organ as Cuthbert Scrymgeour led his stately bride down the broad aisle of St. Olave's Cathedral ; but, as the good old clergyman pronounced his benediction over David and Alice Bruce, a thrush, that had been swinging itself on the topmost branch of the elm tree by the east window, suddenly broke into a loud jubilant strain, grand as any wedding march need be.

David took his wife home to Westwood. They made no bridal tour just then; that was deferred until summer, when they were to go for a long, long visit to the Highlands. Besides, after the hard striving of the past few months, home, with its peace and quietness, was all that either of them needed.

Janet Bruce's bridal gift to her new sister was a little gold bracelet, fastened with a clasp of Bruce tartan. Inside this clasp was a lock of Douglas Ramsay's golden hair, braided with one of Mrs. Edenall's grey brown tresses; and round them both, graven in tiny letters, this line,—Alice knew its meaning now,—

*"They shall not want any good thing."*

Janet fastened it on Alice's wrist the evening of their wedding day, and then slipped quietly out of the room, leaving husband and wife alone. Perhaps there might be a touch of bitterness in her heart as she closed the door upon their new-found joy, but if so it never reached her face. That kept all its old stillness.

Great was the indignation of the Close families when they learned, just on the eve of the marriage, that David Bruce, their distinguished fellow-

citizen, was about to link his name and fame, and genius and position, with a penniless girl who had neither rank nor connections to recommend her; a girl, moreover, whose birth rendered her inadmissible into select society, and who until the last month had been earning her living by taking in plain needlework. Greater still, however, was their bewilderment when the marriage was thus announced in the "*St. Olave's Chronicle*"—

"On Wednesday, at the parish church of Westwood, by the Rev. Canon Hewlet, David Bruce, formerly of the Court House, Perth, to Alice, only child of the late Douglas Ramsay of Glen Ramsay, Perthshire, and Marian Brandon his wife."

So Alice Grey was no base-born parvenu after all. What a mistake the goodly fellowship of the little Cathedral city had made. However there was no help for it. The Position Committee had to retract its verdict and subside into humiliating silence. Gladly, when the fancied stain had been wiped from her escutcheon, would the Close families have welcomed Mrs. David Bruce into their midst, or deluged her with cards and congratulations; but the Westwood home needed no aristocratic patronage now to heighten its happiness or establish its respectability.

The Ramsay estate was confined by entail to male heirs, so that the discovery of the legal marriage between its owner and Marian Brandon brought Alice no pecuniary benefit. Her father's broad acres had passed to a distant member of the family, and Mrs. Edenall's interest in the Brandon Manor ceased with her death, so that the home at Westwood did not, after all, overflow with wealth. Soon after his marriage, David Bruce rented Norlands from Captain Clay, and had the cottage furnished as a summer residence. Mrs. Cromarty continued to reside there as housekeeper, and little Miss Luckie lived to celebrate her ninetieth birthday beneath the shadows of its ancestral elm trees.

Having brought David Bruce and Alice thus far on the journey of life, and seen them fairly started side by side on the matrimonial tramway, it would of course be the most natural thing in the world to leave them jogging comfortably along, giving the reader to suppose that they lived happily ever afterwards, as people in story-books always do when once the ring is on and the benediction said. Such, however, was not exactly the case. Some one says that trust and patience are the keepers of

home happiness, and patience implies trial of one kind or other. David and Alice, as they plodded on through life, found that it contained for them a fair share of the ills which flesh is heir to; not the least of which was the occasional jarring which is at first inseparable from the blending and harmonizing of two diverse natures, educated under different conditions and of different mould. But David and Alice never lost their faith in each other; and always over their human love, with its petty discords and imperfections, there brooded that other and diviner love, hallowing it, ennobling it, purifying it from the dross of earthly feeling.

And so as years rolled on, there came down upon the little Westwood home the unfading light of heaven-given, heaven-sustained peace, even that peace which is made strong through patience and perfect through suffering.

## CHAPTER XXVI.



LIFE creeps on quietly as ever through the musty old Cathedral city of St. Olave's. Still the quaint timbered houses uplift their tall gables, marred by the wind and storm of centuries; and the sunshine, oozing lazily through the narrow streets, ripples over richly carved doorways and picks out the mouldering remains of by-gone grandeur which linger yet in back alleys and dingy court-yards. Still those stiff old saints and martyrs look down in grim dignity from the Cathedral front, and its grey towers loom swarthily as ever upon the clear blue summer sky or the dim cloud-land of winter.

But Mrs. Archdeacon Scrymgeour has long

since ceased to give an eye to them. Chapter Court has passed into other hands. Without asking her opinion on the agreeableness or otherwise of the proceeding, the great Reaper came and bound her up, with all her ecclesiastical dignities, in his sheaves. She sleeps in the south aisle of the Cathedral, side by side with her departed spouse, and a couple of fat little cherubs, with their fingers in their eyes, point to the mural tablet on which the archidiaconal virtues, male and female, are inscribed.

Mrs. Scrymgeour's death, it is believed, was hastened by severe family afflictions. Not long after the marriage of Mr. and Mrs. Cuthbert, old Squire Egerton brought home a young bride, blooming and beautiful, who in the course of three or four years surrounded his table with as many olive branches, all healthy and flourishing, and likely enough to perpetuate the Egerton name down to remote posterity. Of course the Grass-thorpe expectations fell to the ground, and the Archdeacon's widow never recovered the shock. Alice's sudden accession of social caste was an additional blow to her sensibilities; and within



twelvemonths after the marriages of Squire Egerton and David Bruce, she resigned her post as Lady President of the Position Committee, and was gathered to her ancestors.

Martin Speller lies under the sod too. He died as he lived—most people do. First he lost his sight, then he became decrepit, then childish; but still day by day he took his accustomed place amongst the almsfolk at the Cathedral prayers, and listened, with his old half-defiant, half-indifferent air, to the chanted music. He died one sunshiny August afternoon, just as the Close families were rustling, gilt Prayer-books in hand, to their places in the choir. When they knew his change was near, they sent for Mrs. Cromarty. She came and knelt by him, praying God to give her some word for him that might guide his soul through the dark valley.

“Bell’s puttin’ in for prayers,” he muttered, as the well-remembered sound came floating through the still air. “Nowt but prayers—i’ this here place—Prayin’ ain’t no yield—ever I see’d——”

Then the silver cord was loosed, and Martin Speller’s reckoning stands over to the great Hereafter.

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The shadow of the Roman tower at Norlands, lengthening as the day declines, falls on two graves, not nameless now, but covered by a massive marble slab, bearing this inscription :—

“To the Memory of Douglas Ramsay and his spouse, Marian Brandon, who were accidentally killed at this place.”

They are not forgotten. Often in the still summer evenings David Bruce and his wife go there, speaking in low reverent tones of those who lie beneath. And when they are gone, one who perhaps remembers the dead more faithfully than they in their fulness of happy love can do, keeps her silent watch over the sleepers. And it may be in that silent watch the strength comes down which bears her through the long weariness of life, and the hope which hallows all its toil.

Poor Janet Bruce! Peace, peace. It may be grand to place the sword point to our breast, and, weary of the battle's strife, rashly dare the death that lingers over-long. It is grander far to take that sword, and strong in the strength of the lonely, fainting never for any toil or hardship that it brings, to fight bravely, patiently on; until

leaving it buried hilt-deep in the heart of the latest enemy, we wait for the Captain's voice to say— "Enough, come up higher."

THE END.

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